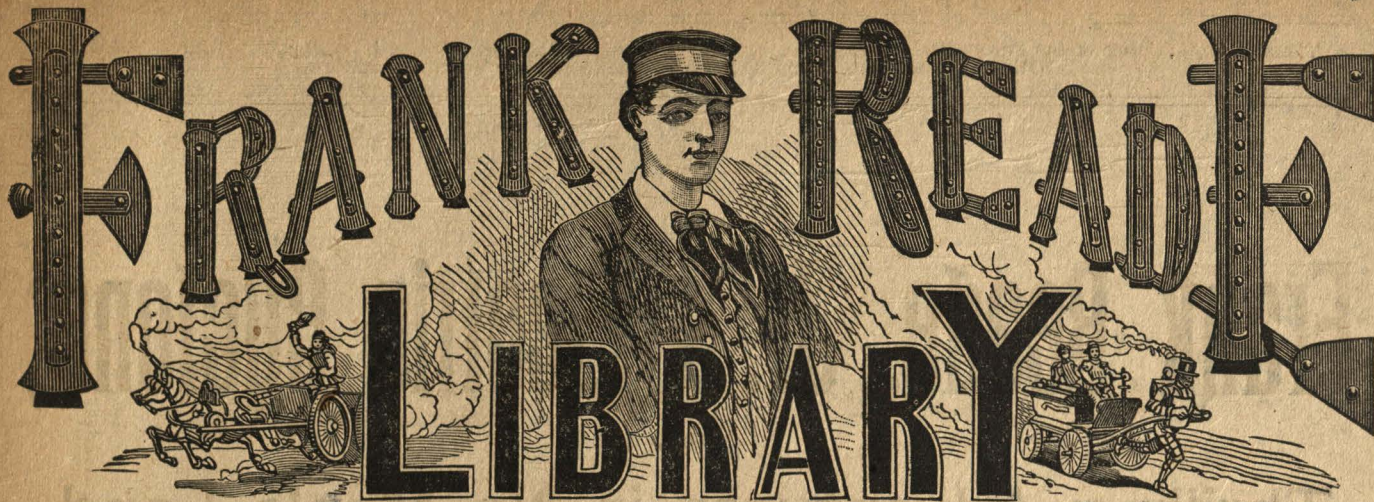


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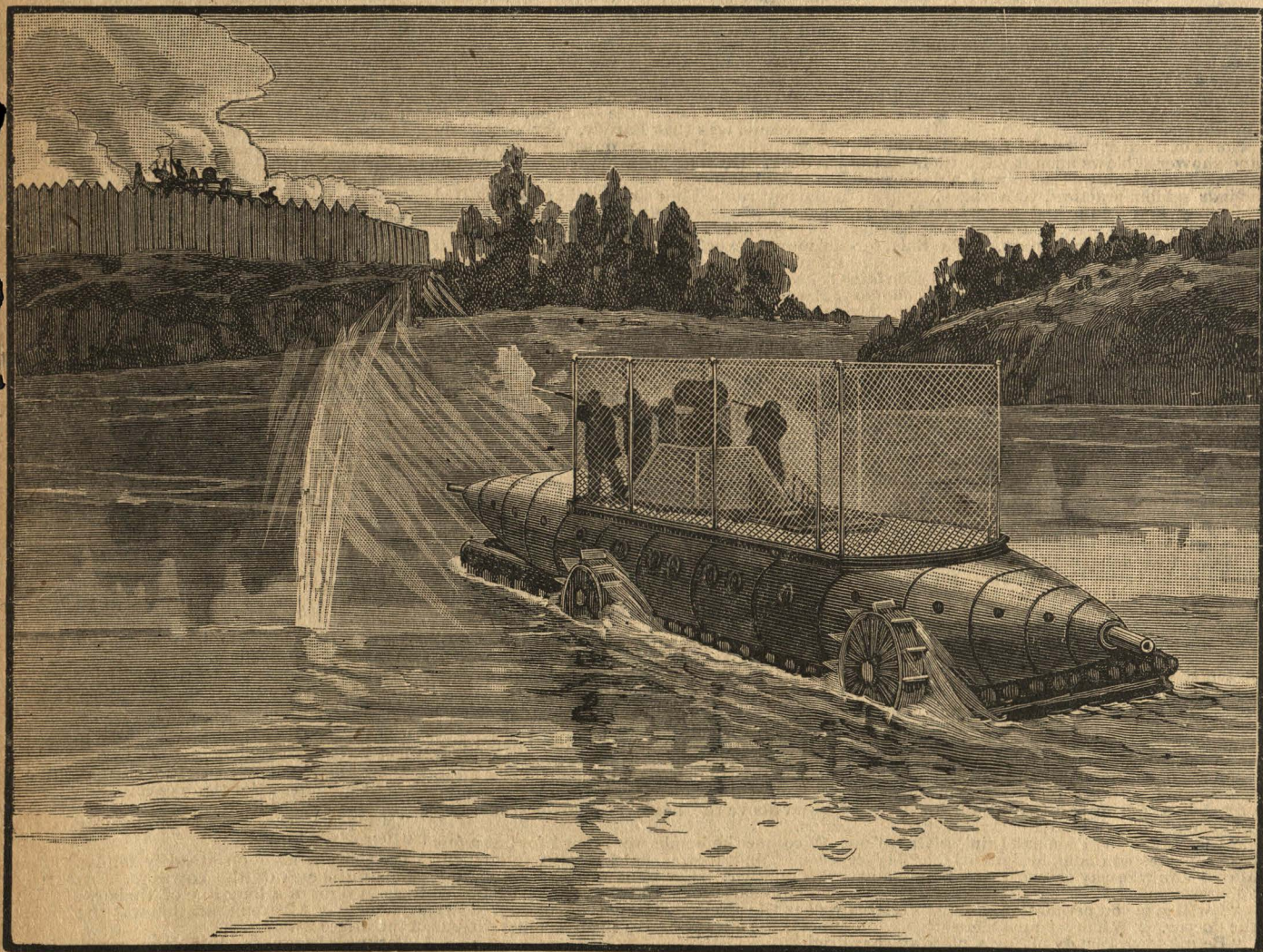
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FRANK READE JR.'S

PART II.

Electric Cyclone;
OR,
THRILLING ADVENTURES IN NO MAN'S LAND.
By "NONAME."



"Begorra, it's thick-headed I am to be sure," cried Barney. "Have at the blasted omadhouns." All fired a volley at the distant gunners and not without effect. Two of them threw up their arms and fell.

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Frank Reade, Jr.'s Electric Cyclone;

OR,

Thrilling Adventures in No Man's Land.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "From Pole to Pole; or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Strange Submarine Voyage," etc., etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A BATTLE WITH APACHES.

THE attack of the Apaches on the Cyclone was a furious and well-directed one. So suddenly did it come that its defenders were unable to make action before the deck and hull outside the steel netting fairly swarmed with the red foe.

Some of them even tried to scale the netting and showered blows upon it with their battle-axes. The attack was made with a daring and a vigor seldom practiced by savages.

Barney and Pomp had rushed to their respective stations. Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder had seized their Winchesters, while Enid, terrified, fled to the safety of the cabin.

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney. "O'i'll soon faix them omadhons! Jist hould yer hosses one moment an' O'i'll give thim a taste av phwat they won't loike."

Barney had sprung to the electric wire which connected the dynamos with the steel hull. He pressed the button and the result was laughable.

The savages were hurled like puppets from the deck of the Cyclone. Not one could keep his hold.

The, to them, mysterious power repelled them with a giant hand. Yet they did not abandon the attack.

To the contrary, they stood away from immediate contact with the Cyclone and hurled missiles at it.

There was danger that the heavy stones might badly batter the Cyclone. So Dr. Vaneyke considered a plan of action.

"Yez had better give them a taste of the electric gun, docthor," said Barney. "I'd scatter the hull tribe av 'em."

"I dislike to create such a slaughter," objected the doctor. "If there was only a way to scare them."

"Glory fo goodness. I'se jes got a plan," cried Pomp, hilariously. "It am berry funny t'ing, too. Jes' yo' say de wo'd, doctor, an' I'll do it, for sure."

"Ah, go on, naygur," snorted Barney, contemptuously. "don't yez go for to puttin' up any sich a job on anny av us dacint people. Yez are givin' us a bluff."

"I jes' show yo', I'ish, dat I ain't givin' yo' no bluff," protested Pomp, indignantly. "Jes' let Marse Vaneyke say de wo'd an' I jes' shows yo' pretty quick."

"I will give you permission, Pomp," declared the doctor. "What is your scheme?"

"Be me sowl, ye ugly bit av a piece av char-

coal," cried Barney, excitedly. "I 'ave it in me moid that yez put up a foine job on me, whin ye electrified them sthairs. Whurroo! Now, I'll have me revinge."

Barney made a dash for Pomp. But the darky did not retreat. On the contrary, he lowered his head quick as a flash and met Barney full and fair in the stomach.

The result was that Barney, very much surprised and breathless, sat down suddenly upon the deck. He was upon his feet quickly, but Pomp had skipped.

Barney rubbed his stomach in a discomfited way and cried savagely:

"On me loife I have it in fer that naygur now, an' may I never live to see the ould sod agin, if I don't come square wid him. That's Barneey O'Shea's worrod on it."

Barney went down to the engine room in quite a huff, while Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder still discussed the best way to settle affairs with the savages.

Both were averse to slaughtering them with the electric gun. Of course, they could not do the Cyclone any material harm at present. Yet it was advisable to drive them off.

The cowboys, on the other side, were firing into the savages, and a desultory fight was in progress. At this moment Pomp appeared on deck.

"I jes' fix dem rapscllions!" he cried, jubilantly. "I'se jes' got de stuff fo' to do dat t'ing."

In his hands Pomp had a number of Japanese bombs. These, with the fuse ignited and thrown high in the air, would burst with a loud report, the air being filled with dragon-like shapes. Both Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder caught the idea at once.

"Capital!" cried the doctor, jubilantly. "You are a trump, Pomp!"

"Golly! won't dem redskins jes' t'ink de debil am after 'em?" cried the excited darky. "Jes' ebervbody stan' aside now, an' de cirklis will begin right off."

Pomp lit the fuse to one of the bombs and threw it up over the netting far over the heads of the savages. It burst in midair, and a number of fiery dragons spitting fire, went sailing around above the heads of the electrified redskins.

Of course the bombs were timed for but a few seconds, and it was necessary to follow one with another. Up went another bomb, out came more dragons, and the sparks of fire as well as the dragons themselves, sailing down among the savages, gave them a superstitious fright.

With wild yells, they broke ranks and galloped to a safe distance out on the plain. There they halted, and made the air hideous with their baffled yells.

Dr. Vaneyke applauded Pomp's success, and the darky was highly elated.

"Didn't I tell yo' Marse Vaneyke! Dis chile am no fool on de Injine question. I done fix dem chaps right off quick."

The savages were making a wild tumult. Dr. Vaneyke smiled grimly.

"I'll soon stop that!" he muttered.

He gave orders to Barney to swing the Cyclone about so as to bring the electric gun to bear upon the redskins. This was done, and then Dr. Vaneyke carefully sighted the gun.

A bolt was thrown almost at the feet of the yelling horde. The air was filled with lightning flashes and a literal mound of earth was raised.

When the smoke and dust had cleared away, the terrified horde of barbarians could be seen in the distance, fast becoming a speck upon the horizon in their mad retreat.

They were effectually disposed of. The battle was over.

The cowboys had remained startled witnesses of the power of the dread Cyclone. They were quite willing in their terror to do anything that was required of them.

Now that the savages were disposed of, Dr. Vaneyke resumed his negotiations with Pedro Alvarez, which was the name of the spokesman of the party.

As a result Alvarez came aboard the Cyclone and while his companions rode on ahead to show the way, he was in conference with Dr. Vaneyke.

Alvarez gazed about him curiously as he came aboard the Cyclone.

The electric wonder was a marvel indeed to him. He started at sight of Enid Weston and exclaimed:

"Per Dios! I have seen her before."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke, with interest. "May I ask where?"

"Certainly, senior. In the stronghold of Carlos Coleman at the butte cavern."

"Then you have been there?"

"Many a time. Hernando and Carlos are partners, you know."

The Cyclone kept on steadily following the galloping horses of the cowboys. Soon they came in sight of a long line of timber. It was explained by Alvarez that this was the border of the Miaco Swamp.

Darkness began to shut down rapidly now.

When the timber line was reached the gloom was thick and impenetrable.

The rays of the search-light held the galloping cowboys always in view. They dared not break away for they feared the deadly lightning bolts behind them.

Pomp was at the wheel and kept a good watch of the prairie ahead for obstructions. To strike a stump or a boulder might disarrange the Cyclone's machinery.

Quite a clear space intervened between the Cyclone and the cowboys. Pomp kept watch of this. Dark, gaunt forms of wolves were seen shooting in and out of the timber, and suddenly a sharp, startled cry burst from Pomp's lips, and he jingled the bell in the engine-room.

Instantly the Cyclone came to a halt.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

THE most vivid of imaginations could hardly depict adequately the awful position of Frank Reade, Jr.

He could hear the ravenous wolves snapping and howling in the darkness about him. He knew that it was only a question of a short time when they would venture to attack him.

He could not have been in a more helpless position.

Buried to his neck in the sand of the plain he could hardly make use of the power of speech. He could make not the slightest bit of resistance to the savage foes.

In that forsaken spot, and at that hour he could not look for rescue. It might be months before a human being would pass that way, and then they would find only his skull as the only evidence of the awful deed.

Centuries of horror and agony of spirit were endured by the young inventor in that short space of time.

He had spoken truly when he had said that he did not fear death. But he thought of his unfulfilled mission, of the dear ones at home, of his proud projects in life, and he felt horror-struck and sick at heart.

He could almost feel the fangs of his destroyers even now sinking into his temples. Their hot breath seemed already to suffocate him.

It was all like a horrible nightmare, yet a fearful sight more realistic. Was there, no power on earth to save him?

Involuntarily he turned his gaze upward, and between his parched lips murmured faintly:

"Oh, God! am I to die thus?"

Already the wolves were nearing him, cautiously. They had scented their prey, and occasionally one would dash past, so near as to almost brush against him.

In a few moments they would become emboldened, and then the sequel would be brief and fatal.

Now one gaunt form came sneaking up through the darkness. As he went by Frank's face he snapped his horrid jaws within a bare inch of it. The young inventor closed his eyes and waited for the end.

But suddenly a strange sound smote upon his hearing. It was the distant thunder of horses' hoofs.

Frank's trained hearing told him this. In an instant the young inventor's hopes revived. It was like coming back from the embrace of the tomb.

Would rescue come? Were the horses approaching? Would they pass near him?

They were approaching from the rear. Frank was unable to turn his head, but a faint light began to steal over the prairie about him.

The night riders undoubtedly carried a light. Ah, it seemed a certainty that they would see him then.

It was a dispensation of Providence. He was to be rescued after all. A wonderful sense of joy stole over Frank Reade, Jr.

Every moment the horsemen came nearer. But they did not stop. They had not yet seen him.

Then a chill struck Frank. It was hardly likely that they would be able to identify him as a living being in his present position. He tried to turn his head and shout.

But his voice was a faint whisper. The horsemen were coming directly down upon him. They might ride directly over him. A blow from a passing hoof might crush his skull.

All these thoughts passed over Frank Reade, Jr., in a short space of time. Another chilling thought struck him.

The horsemen, even if they discovered his presence, might not be friends. Indeed, it was

quite possible that they were the cowboys of Hernando's returned, or even a hunting party of Apaches.

In any case, it was evident that they would ride over him. The next moment the flying hoofs were all about him. Frank waited for the blow which was to take his life.

But it did not come. The entire cavalcade passed directly over him. There were times when the flying hoofs came perilously near his face, but happily they did not strike him.

The horsemen had gone on. Frank's heart sank.

But now a new and thrilling surprise awaited him. To his surprise the light about him became like day. A thundering sound in his rear struck him as familiar. In a moment he had grasped the situation.

"The Cyclone!" he gasped. "They are in pursuit of the horsemen. Oh, if Pomp could only see me!"

He made a herculean effort to twist his face about. For an instant he saw the Cyclone, for an instant his white, agonized face was revealed in the search-light's glare.

But that instant was sufficient. Pomp at the wheel saw it, and it was this which had caused him to bring the Cyclone to such a sudden halt.

"Fo' de good Lor's sakes!" cried the astounded dorky. "I done seen a human head out dar on de perairy widout any body to it, an' it done looked up to me!"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke. "That is your imagination, Pomp."

"No, sah. I can take my oaf dat it was de face of Marse Frank hisself," insisted the excited dorky. "Jes' yo' turn dat search-light down on to de perairy, Marse Vaneyke, an' yo' can see fo' yo'self."

The scientist still doubted Pomp's declaration, though he complied with his request. The search-light's rays were concentrated upon Frank Reade, Jr.'s head.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder in the same breath. "Pomp is right. There is a human head out there on the prairie! What can it mean?"

"Let down the gangway!" cried Snyder. "I will go out and investigate."

"I am with you," said the doctor.

In a brief space of time the gangway was lowered, and both approached the object on the ground. Then they saw and recognized the features.

"My God!" almost shrieked Dr. Vaneyke. "It is Frank Reade, Jr."

Frank tried to speak, but was unable to. He could only move his lips and breathe with difficulty, so great was the pressure upon his chest.

It required but a glance for his friends to at once comprehend the situation. Instantly spades were brought from the Cyclone, and in a jiffy Frank was released from his fearful position.

He was carried aboard the Cyclone, and stimulants were given him. Barney and Pomp leaped and danced with joy when they were apprised that their dear employer was safe and unharmed.

"Be me sowl!" cried Barney, in a transport, "it's kilt intirely we thought yez wor, Mister Frank. Och! it's good for sore eyes to see yez back agin!"

"Lor' sabs us!" cried Pomp, with eyes like bulging agates. "What if I had done run ober yo' an' neber seed yo', Marse Frank?"

"It is all a miracle!" declared Frank, recovering his voice. "I owe much to a Divine Power, but for a while I thought my end had come."

Then he related the account of his capture in the ranch by the treachery of Miguel Hernando, and how he had been brought to this place and left to a horrible fate.

"When the horsemen failed to see me, then I gave up all hope!" he concluded.

"The horsemen!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "They were the cowboys. Mercy on us! did they ride over you without doing you harm?"

"You see my time had not come," declared Frank with a smile. "But these horsemen—were they not some of the cowboys whom you were chasing?"

"They are our prisoners!" declared Dr. Vaneyke, then he stopped short as a sudden apprehension crossed his mind. He instantly made swift investigation.

This resulted in a startling discovery. The whole party were thrown into a state of great excitement by it.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ONCE MORE WITH FRIENDS.

IN the excitement attendant upon the rescue of Frank Reade, Jr., nobody had given the cowboys a thought. Receiving no orders to halt they had kept on, and were long since out of sight and hearing.

No doubt they had taken advantage of the opportunity to escape. This theory found easy verification, when, upon looking for Pedro Alvarez, it was found that he was also missing.

The steel door in the netting had been left open, and he was, doubtless, ere this, deep in the forest and beyond pursuit.

Dr. Vaneyke looked blankly at Snyder. Here was a pretty how-de-do.

"Well, I'm beat this time!" exclaimed the scientist, disgustedly. "I really think I am losing my wits in my old age."

"It is no more your fault than mine," declared the detective.

"Bejabers, I've a mind to go afther the omadhoun now," declared Barney, looking longingly at the forest.

"Jes' yo' counts me in fo' a no good nigger," cried Pomp, thumping his skull vigorously.

"I was jes' so excited ober Marse Frank, dat I couldn't jes' t'ink ob nuffin' else."

"Don't reproach yourselves, not one of you!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., who had now regained his feet. "It is all right. We have no further use, as I can see, for the cowboys. They would never lead us to the stronghold of Coleman, for I do not believe that they know just where it is. Leave matters in my hands now, friends. I must congratulate you, however, upon your pluck and shrewd management during my absence. But for it, the Cyclone would now be in the hands of the foe."

Dr. Vaneyke blushed happily at this expression of praise, and Snyder came in for his share. As for Barney and Pomp, a congratulatory look from Frank set them jubilant.

It was a jolly opportunity for a lark, and Barney saw a golden opportunity.

He had had it in for Pomp ever since the latter electrified the engine-room stairs.

While Frank's back was turned to welcome Enid, who had just come out of the cabin, Barney drew a suspicious-looking black bottle out of his pocket, and exposed it to Pomp's uncertain view for a second.

"Whist! don't ye give it away, me sunburned gossoon," he whispered in a mysterious manner. "Shure, nobody's more glad to see the masher aloive agin than Barney O'Shea, an' it's the proper toime to do a bit of celebratin' in his honor, bejabers! Are yez wid me, naygur?"

Pomp cut a caper, and said in reply as solemn as an owl:

"What yo' got in datar bottle, I'ish? It am cold watah!"

"Yez are anudder!" retorted Barney. "Come along wid me inter the engine-room, an' I'll show yez the best swig avould Oirish whiskey yez ever closed yez throat over. Whurroo! Come along now, man."

Pomp needed no urging. He made some remark about the climate being conducive to ague, and followed Barney like a sheep to the slaughter.

At least so that frolicsome Hibernian thought as he repressed the merry twinkle in his shrewd eyes and led the way. Down into the engine-room they went.

It was quite dark there, and Barney drew a bottle from his pocket. Pomp heard him take a gulping draught and smack his lips afterwards. The dorky's mouth watered, and he eagerly opened his mouth as Barney held up to it a bottle—but, it is needless to say, not the bottle he had drank out of himself.

That very wicked and deceitful Irishman was now getting in his work upon Pomp for all offenses. The moment the bottle touched Pomp's lips, he simply wished he hadn't, that was all.

Barney had procured a quantity of the strongest of ammonia and loaded the bottle with it. The bottle itself was of soft rubber and capable of being compressed between the fingers. Into Pomp's face shot a full current of the pungent ammonia and the effect was terrific.

The dorky thought his last moment had come. Wholly unable to get his breath, he went off as if struck by a cannon ball.

Then the raw ammonia, getting in its work in his mouth and nostrils, by the time he had caught his breath he gave one long howl and tore up to the deck like a madman. With frantic howls and groans he raced across the Cyclone's deck and back again, bringing Frank Reade, Jr., and everybody else out of the cabin.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked Frank, as the doctor and the detective held Pomp firmly in their clutches. "What has happened to you, Pomp?"

But Pomp could not open his mouth to reply, so fearfully did his lips and tongue smart. Then Frank smelled the ammonia about him and guessed the truth.

"Barney!" he shouted. "Come up here!"

The Celt came meekly on deck and regarded Pomp furtively, as he stood sheepishly before his employers.

"Yis, sir," he said, with a scrape.

"What did you give Pomp?"

"Shure, sar, I had a bit av good ould whisky an' the nagur had a bit av a chill, an' I—I think it was a bit too sthrong, sar."

"Whisky!" exclaimed Frank, forcibly. "It smells like whisky, don't it? Barney, I am ashamed of you. If that ammonia had struck into Pomp's eyes, the result might have been serious."

"Shure, sar, I'll niver do it agin," sputtered Barney, "but the nagur roasted me a bit ago in the engine-room, sar, an' I had jist to get square, sah."

Pomp had by this time regained his voice and his pugilistic ability also. He made a whack at Barney.

"I done pallyze you, yo' good fo' nuffin' I'sh-man!" he yelled. "Yo' neber want to play no mo' such tricks on me. I tell yo' dat fo' a sut-tin' fac'."

Barney retreated precipitately to the engine-room. Pomp went after him, but Barney closed and bolted the door. They contented themselves with calling each other names behind the barrier.

Frank exchanged glances with Snyder and Dr. Vaneyke, and with a laugh, said:

"Well, I don't see how we are going to keep those rascals from maltreating each other. Let them go it."

"Shall we go on further to-night?" asked Dr. Vaneyke, as they descended again to the cabin.

"I think not," replied Frank. "We can gain nothing to-night. With daylight we will try and invade the swamp."

All on board the Cyclone were glad enough to rest that night. Even Barney and Pomp became reconciled and went to their berths peaceably.

The Cyclone was put in readiness for the night. The steel door in the netting was locked and also the trap in the steel hull was barred.

A guard or watch seldom did duty on board the Cyclone. The electric wonder was considered impervious to a prowling foe, so there did not seem to be any need of a watch.

Frank was indulging in much needed slumber in his stateroom. Enid was asleep in her chamber, and Dr. Vaneyke and Duncan Snyder were in the land of nod.

Barney and Pomp in their quarters forward were swearing like troopers. The search-light was extinguished, the dynamos were idle, only sufficient current being maintained to keep the colored watch-lights in the pilot-house going.

So it happened that none on board saw a dark form glide out of the darkness of the timber. It was a man closely muffled.

There were other dark forms in the forest but they remained there. This one man ventured to stealthily climb upon the hull of the Cyclone.

He tried the door in the steel netting. It would not open. Then he drew from his pocket a number of steel files and a saw, with a bottle of oil.

He began work upon the netting close beside the door. The saw noiselessly separated the links of the netting until a small orifice was made. Through this the daring invader thrust his arm. In a moment he had undone the bolts and the door swung open. At a motion from him a dozen dark forms flitted out of the gloom and sprang aboard the Cyclone.

CHAPTER XL.

A BOLD ATTACK.

LIKE silent phantoms the invaders crept upon the deck of the Cyclone. The man who had sawed his way through the steel netting gave whispered orders to them.

Once in the light, his face was revealed. He was no other than Miguel Hernando.

The truth was, the ranchero had returned to make sure that Frank Reade, Jr., had met the fate he had allotted to him. To his surprise he found the Cyclone upon the spot.

He fell in with Pedro Alvarez, who had been in the forest all the while. From him he learned the details of the famous inventor's rescue.

"Curse the luck!" he gritted, angrily. "That chap has the lives of a cat. But you were aboard the Cyclone, Pedro; what did you learn?"

"Enough to satisfy me, Miguel, that we can get aboard if we go to work right."

"Ah, say you so?"

It was the plan of Alvarez that a saw and oil be used to make a hole in the steel netting. Then he described the manner of bars and bolts upon the door, and how they were to be undone.

Hernando, thus guided, effected an entrance to the Cyclone.

Once upon the deck of the electric wonder, Hernando held a whispered consultation with Alvarez.

"I want to strike a blow at the old fox first," he declared, sibilantly. "If we don't settle him first he will be apt to circumvent us with some one of his electric appliances. Do you see?"

"Ay," replied Alvarez, eagerly. "You are right. Go ahead and we will watch. Do not fear."

"But where shall I look for him?" cried Hernando, hoarsely.

"That is his cabin, just amidships. He sleeps there. Strike home, Miguel!"

"Leave that to me."

"One word more."

"Well?"

"As soon as you have driven the knife into his heart, whistle, and we will rush in upon the others and quiet them."

"Very well, Pedro."

"You will not fail?"

"No."

And while this deadly peril menaced them, the defenders of the Cyclone slept the sleep of exhausted nature. The invasion by the foe had been so quiet and easy that not one had been disturbed.

Had they known of the real state of affairs, they would have trembled. It seemed that they were really at the mercy of a murderous foe.

Hernando, with a deadly knife held between his white teeth, crept to the stairway of Frank's cabin. He moved cautiously and silently.

An electric light burned dimly in the cabin.

Frank's state-room door was open and the assassin saw him plainly reclining in his berth. Hernando's face lit up with an evil exultation.

"Ah!" he muttered to himself, "*Per Dios!* nothing could have worked better. You escaped the wolves, Senor Reade, but this time I light,

will make sure of you. You are my lawful prey now."

He crept to the door of the state-room. The knife was in his hand and murder was in his black heart.

Under ordinary circumstances Frank Reade, Jr., might easily have been murdered right there in his sleep. He seemed wholly at the mercy of his foe.

But this was really not so. When he constructed the Cyclone, Frank had foreseen a possibility of this sort, and made an invention to guard against it.

This was a secret wire which rang a tremendous gong at the head of the bed the moment an intruder put a foot over the threshold.

There was skillfully concealed beneath the planks an electric battery, and it needed only the pressure upon the board to set the machinery of alarm working. It was a clever invention.

So it happened that the moment Hernando set his foot over the threshold, the gong rang.

The ranchero guessed at the trick, and was ready to spring upon Frank Reade, Jr. Had he reached him with that deadly knife in his hand, that hour would have been the young inventor's last.

But it was not ordained that Frank Reade, Jr., should thus come to so summary an end. A merciful Providence watched over him still.

Very cleverly Frank had taken precautions which would insure his safety were he ever attacked unawares, as in the present case. Just at the foot of the berth a secret wire was concealed in a little groove extending across the floor of the state-room. All this was so cleverly arranged, that, upon retiring, Frank could set the alarm, which would ring if anybody attempted to enter, and in the same instant, by an automatic arrangement, would elevate the wire from its groove two feet, and also heavily charge it.

Contact with that heavily-charged wire was a serious matter, and Frank could not have raised a better barrier of defense.

The result was that Hernando, not knowing of the existence of the wire, in trying to spring upon Frank's sleeping form, was hurled across the state-room with such force as to stun him.

The next moment Frank Reade, Jr., was thoroughly aroused. He sprang out of the berth and touched an electric key which illumined the Cyclone throughout.

He saw the true state of affairs at once. It was but a moment's work to press a small knob which shut off the electric current from the guard wire and returned it to its groove. Then, grasping a piece of rope, he sprang upon Hernando.

Before the ranchero could recover from his stupor the young inventor had him bound tightly hand and foot. Then Frank sprang out upon the deck.

Here he found a thrilling state of affairs. The cowboys, waiting for the whistle from Hernando to spring the surprise upon the defenders of the Cyclone, were the recipients of the surprise themselves.

The same alarm which aroused Frank Reade, Jr., also aroused the others, and instantly Barney and Pomp, Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder rushed out upon the deck.

In the glare of the electric lights they saw the situation at a glance. The cowboys drawing their revolvers fired at them, but fortunately without doing any harm.

Pomp and Barney retreated into the engine-room, Dr. Vaneyke went to the pilot-house, and Snyder slid in behind the support of the search-

All had their Winchesters and at once opened fire on the cowboys. Three of them were wounded, and just as Frank Reade, Jr., sprang from his state-room they retreated through the steel door in the netting precipitately, and disappeared with wild and baffled yells in the darkness.

Barney turned the search-light after them, and shots were exchanged, but with small effect.

The door was closed in the netting of steel, and then the startled defenders of the Cyclone were able to see how the foe had cleverly gained entrance.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Snyder, in amazement, "that is as pretty a job as I ever saw. The chap who sawed those wires is a clever hand at it, and he has done the same thing before I'll warrant."

"It's a pity they escaped," declared Dr. Vaneyke. "We ought to have had them in durcance vile."

"Never mind!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., triumphantly. "We have the ringleader in limbo, anyway."

This was news to the others, who did not know that Hernando had been entrapped. Frank detailed the little affair in his state-room, then said:

"Let's take a look at the sleek rascal."

But before this could be done, a wild, terrified, feminine shriek rang through the Cyclone's cabin.

CHAPTER XL.

HERNANDO'S ESCAPE.

THAT scream all knew could be uttered by none other than Enid Weston. Moreover, it was a signal of distress, and at once aroused every man.

"What is the matter?" gasped Frank Reade, Jr. "Has anybody seen Enid since the attack of the foe?"

"Her state-room is forward," replied Dr. Vaneyke, excitedly. "Perhaps some one of the scoundrels has found his way thither."

"Golly! dis chile tink's dat am a fac'," cried Pomp.

Barney grabbed his Winchester and sprang after Frank Reade, Jr., who had gone into the cabin with a couple of long leaps. The others followed.

When Frank bound Hernando with the rope which he found in his state-room, he did so hurriedly. It did not enter his mind in that brief space of time which ensued that the villain could liberate himself.

At first the ranchero had been stunned with the force of the electric shock. He had been unable to resist when bound by Frank, but as soon as the young inventor was gone he recovered quickly.

He realized that his clever scheme to capture the Cyclone had failed, and that he was in the power of his dreaded foe.

Hernando was a merciless brute, who set no value upon human life, and he judged Frank Reade, Jr., by himself.

It was his belief that Frank would execute him summarily, and at once the love of life, so strong upon the villain, made him desperate beyond measure.

"*Per Dios!*" he gritted. "Curse the beastly luck! I shall be lucky to get out of this scrape alive. This Senor Reade is surely a wizard, when one cannot approach him without being knocked over by something invisible."

The fellow's superstitious fears were aroused. He knew little of the powers of electricity and did not ascribe his defeat in any measure to that force.

Instinctively he began to work upon his bonds. To his great joy they began to yield and the hempen rope stretched.

He could hear the conflict between his comrades and the aroused defenders of the Cyclone, and knew that the former were getting the worst of it.

This nerved him to desperation and he made a mighty effort to free himself. The effort proved successful.

The bonds slipped from his wrists and he seized a knife which lay upon the table and severed those which bound his feet. He was now a free man.

But how was he to escape from the Cyclone? He glanced through the door and saw that it would be madness to attempt to cross the Cyclone's deck.

In his extremity he looked for another means of exit. A narrow door led down a flight of stairs to the lower cabin of the Cyclone. Hernando saw this and passed down the stairs quickly. This brought him into the lower cabin where he was accorded a thrilling surprise.

It chanced that Enid's state-room was just off from this cabin. The young girl had heard the rifle shots and the rumpus overhead and had come out of her room.

Just as she did so, Hernando, in a terrified and stealthy manner, came through the cabin. In an instant he caught sight of her, and sprang towards her.

In his insane terror his only thought was that she would betray him, and his impulse was to silence her. Therefore he seized her in his powerful arms and endeavored to clasp a hand over her lips.

But Enid resisted him stoutly and sent a wild scream of terror up on the air. This was heard by those on deck, and the shuffling of their feet was heard as they came to the rescue.

Hernando was in a quandary of doubt and terror. He was hardly able to decide upon a move. But the foe were coming. Something must be done.

With an impulse he hurled Enid from him and dashed through a door at the far end of the cabin. This took him into the gun-room.

As chance had it, the electric gun was drawn back on its runnions away from the port. This was an avenue of escape, and the villain did not hesitate to seize it.

In a moment he was crawling on his belly through the aperture just large enough to allow of his passage. Then he dropped down to the ground, and picking himself up made good his escape in the gloom.

Frank Reade, Jr., was the first to leap down into the cabin. He met Enid, half fainting, and caught her in his arms.

"What is it?" he asked, quickly. "You screamed for help?"

"I did," replied the young girl, breathlessly. "It was a horrible man, who seized me in his arms and tried to choke me. He has gone into the gun-room."

"You are not hurt, then?"

"No."

"Go to your room, then. We will look after the fellow," cried Frank, dashing into the gun-room. But the escape of Hernando was soon made apparent. The famous inventor's chagrin knew no bounds.

All were now congregated in the gun-room. Barney made haste to place the electric gun in position, so that the port was closed.

"This is the hardest kind of luck!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, disappointedly. "We may never succeed in getting the villain in limbo again."

"He must have slipped his bonds," declared

Frank, dubiously. "And yet I felt sure that I made them secure."

"I done tink we better gib de chap a run in de dark," suggested Pomp.

"I'm av the same mind," cried Barney. "If ye'll lave me an' the naygur go out we'll soon fetch him back."

"No harm can come of giving the fellow a chase," agreed Frank. "But I have no idea that we shall be able to recapture him."

"At least, we can try," cried Snyder, as he slipped some fresh cartridges into his Winchester. "Come on, Barney and Pomp, I am with you."

Frank and Dr. Vaneyke remained to look after Enid and calm her fears, while the three pursuers left the Cyclone. An hour later they returned after a fruitless quest.

To be sure, Barney had run into a number of the cowboys in the verge of the swamp and shots were exchanged. But the foe had retreated and all efforts to ferret them out were fruitless.

This ended the excitement for that night. Frank took good care to place Barney on guard until daybreak.

It is needless to say, however, that very little sleep was indulged in by any. With the coming of daybreak, all were astir at an early hour.

But at the breakfast hour Frank Reade, Jr., did not appear.

He had been locked in his state-room with the blinds closed. When Pomp rapped on the door to call him, the faithful darky heard him moving about, and the reply came:

"All right, Pomp. I will be out soon. Do not wait for me."

"A' right, Marse Frank," replied the puzzled darky.

It was some while after the others had eaten their breakfast that the famous inventor came on deck. There was nothing in his appearance that would indicate that he had spent the whole night in the hardest kind of a study to devise a way for routing the outlaws from their stronghold in the swamp.

But this was a fact. Frank Reade, Jr., meant to accomplish his purpose, and he was certainly possessed of the natural ability and ingenuity to do it. When the subtle mechanism of his brain was set at work no obstacle could stay its execution.

It was only after breakfast that Dr. Vaneyke ventured to approach him on the subject.

"Well, Frank," he said, quietly. "I presume we shall endeavor to in some way rout Coleman out of this new retreat. But I don't exactly see how we can do it."

"The plan is very simple," replied Frank Reade, Jr., coolly. "I have worked it all out to my complete satisfaction. It will be but a question of time, and that time will be short."

CHAPTER XLII.

MAKING OBSERVATIONS.

DR. VANEYKE was astonished. This declaration not only surprised him, but aroused his curiosity.

He was far too polite to bluntly question the great inventor. So he employed skillful theorizing.

"I can't quite see how we can take the Cyclone into the swamp," he said, cautiously, "unless we have the good fortune to discover a road."

"Which is possible, but hardly likely," agreed Frank. "First of all, we must exactly locate this stronghold."

"I concur in that," replied the doctor.

"That matter settled, we can then quickly

decide upon a method of reaching and attacking that stronghold."

"Ah! but there's the rub. To locate the stronghold would seem like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Humph! that is the very easiest trick of all."

The aged scientist looked wonderingly at Frank. The famous inventor had spoken with much assurance. The doctor had always given Frank Reade, Jr., credit for a vast amount of ingenuity, and while he did not doubt the success of his plan, he wondered much what it might be.

Frank Reade, Jr., read his mind quite easily, and smiled quietly. He was silent a moment, and finally said:

"There is no reason why I should not reveal my plan to you, doctor."

Dr. Vaneyke's face flushed with delight.

"Indeed I shall be happy," he declared.

"It will be easy enough to locate Coleman's hiding-place in the swamp, but not so easy to reach it. I will not disclose my plans for the latter exigency. As to the former, just wait one moment."

Frank touched a knob, which rang an electric bell. In a moment Pomp came tumbling up from below, and Barney came out of his quarters.

"Barney and Pomp," said the famous inventor, "you may go into the store chamber and bring me a steel-bound chest which you will find there. Bring it up on deck."

The two faithful fellows ducked their heads and vanished. Then Frank turned to the doctor again.

"I feel confident that a very short time now will end our quest. I believe that the stand Coleman makes in this stronghold will be his last. We must take care to keep him hemmed in."

"Ah! that looks reasonable," declared the doctor who was anxiously awaiting the return of Pomp and Barney with the mysterious chest.

In a few moments they came on deck, panting and tugging away at their heavy burden. The box was deposited at Frank's feet and the famous inventor quickly unlocked it, and threw back the lid.

A great mass of oiled silk and strong silk cords was revealed.

Like a flash the idea instantly dawned upon Dr. Vaneyke, full force. He drew himself up with a sharp cry:

"A balloon!" he cried. "Well, I never thought of that."

"I told you the idea was a simple one," replied Frank, with a laugh. "But I did not study all night to formulate it. I told you it would be easy enough to locate the stronghold of the outlaw, but not so easy to reach it."

"So you did!" cried the doctor, who was carried away with the idea. "Will you make the ascension, Frank?"

"Yes, and you may accompany me if you like. I have a long silken rope which will regulate the height to which we may want to ascend. We shall need to go up high enough to look down upon the swamp at all events."

The doctor was delighted with the plan, and it was decided to waste no time. Accordingly, Frank caused a chemical generator of gas, one of his many inventions, to be brought from the hold.

This with the balloon was conveyed to the prairie, after making sure that none of the enemy were in the vicinity. Barney and Pomp were set at work filling the balloon. Soon it

was rapidly distending with the volume of gas.

Frank Reade, Jr., and the doctor watched the proceeding until the big bag was filled to its utmost. Then they prepared for the ascension.

It required the combined efforts of Barney and Pomp and Snyder to keep the monster under control until Frank and the doctor could clamber into the car. The balloon was not one of the largest size but would easily support two men, being of the kind used by the army corps.

Plunging and leaping at its tether, the balloon was eager to ascend. The two men were now in the basket, and Frank in a sharp voice cried:

"All ready, Barney! Let out on the rope! I will signal you when we are up high enough."

A windlass had been rigged for the paying out of the rope, and now the balloon rose steadily upward. At an altitude of five hundred feet Frank judged that they were high enough up and signaled Barney.

The balloon came to a stop, being suspended high in the air. Those below waited and watched for the signal that was to lower the balloon.

As they went up in the air Frank and the doctor saw unfolded before them a strange and wild panorama of wilderness.

To the eastward were the broad plains, with mountains far beyond. To the westward was a scene which at once claimed their undivided attention.

The mighty swamp land lay beneath them, with an expanse of many square miles. Its confines extended to the edge of a vast plateau, beyond which were mountain ranges. It was a wild scene.

Tangled forest and miles of treacherous morass extended back from the prairie floor. Through all this mighty wilderness there ran a small river, whose current in places seemed partly choked with weeds and grass.

Frank and the doctor, in silence for some moments, studied this scene with their glasses. Then a sharp cry escaped the young inventor's lips.

"Ha!" he cried, "I told you so. Look there, doctor!"

But the scientist had at the same moment seen the cause of Frank's exclamation. A thrilling sight it was, too.

Not more than a mile from the prairie, in the depths of the morass and upon the bank of the river, was an island high and dry. Along the river side of this there extended a high parapet or breastwork of logs.

Upon the eastern side, and in the verge of the cypress growth, was a palisade or stockade which defended the island from invasion in that direction. One large log-house and numerous smaller ones were scattered about. This was the stronghold of Coleman, the outlaw.

Indeed, a large body of men could be seen excitedly gathered in the center of the inclosure. It was evident that they had observed the balloon and were greatly excited over it.

"Just as I thought!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., triumphantly. "We have found the stronghold of the foe. Why, Coleman could remain buried in that place for years, and the world would be none the wiser. Of course, they must have some secret way of reaching that island with their horses, but I doubt if it would be a broad enough path to allow of the passage of the Cyclone. Well, we have settled the question, doctor, now let us descend and plan for the invasion. I fancy some one of those mis-

creants may have a magazine rifle, which would easily throw a bullet up here. We will go down."

Frank leaned over the basket and signaled to Barney. The balloon began to descend, but suddenly there was a sharp, whip-like crack, and Frank saw the bag collapsing.

He saw a sharp rent in its side, and realized that his fear with regard to a stray bullet had found verification. Some one of the foe had, despite the distance, sent a bullet through the body of the balloon.

CHAPTER XLIII.

INTO THE SWAMP.

To a novice, the thought that the balloon was collapsing would have been terrifying. To Frank Reade, Jr., and Dr. Vaneyke, however, who were skilled aeronauts, there was little thought of danger.

At that altitude the gas could not escape from the balloon with sufficient rapidity to admit of a dangerous fall. The balloon would reach the ground quickly but with a gentle shock.

It was no thought of the fall that thrilled Frank with dismay. It was the thought that the bullet had seriously damaged the air-ship.

"Confound those miscreants!" muttered the world-famous inventor. "They have spoiled the balloon. I would like to spoil their den with a ball from the electric gun."

"You will very likely soon get the chance," cried Dr. Vaneyke.

"I hope so."

Barney and Pomp and Snyder from below had seen the collapse of the balloon. The latter was terrified, for he expected to see the two men dashed into eternity upon the ground at his feet.

But this did not happen. The balloon gyrated and collapsed and sank slowly down. When it touched the ground, Barney and Pomp secured it, and the two aeronauts leaped out.

"Now for business!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., determinedly. "Before twenty-four hours we must lay siege to the foe in his stronghold."

"Golly! Marse Frank," cried Pomp, excitedly. "Yo' don't say as how yo' hab foun' out jes' whar' it am, do yo'?"

"I have," replied Frank; "just exhaust the balloon of gas, Barney and Pomp, and stow it away. Then report on deck, we have got work to do."

"Ay, ay, sor!" cried Barney, with a Fenian whoop. "Shure we'll show the omadhouns a thing or two, or I'll niver be called Barney O'Shea agin."

Snyder was listening to Dr. Vaneyke's account of the view from the balloon. The detective was overjoyed at the prospect. Even Enid listened eagerly.

Meanwhile, the balloon was safely stored away in the hold of the Cyclone, and Barney and Pomp reported to Frank Reade, Jr., on deck. The famous inventor at once broached his plan.

"It is necessary to get the Cyclone near enough to the stockade to attack the foe," he declared. "Now, there is only one way to do that. Just here at this point there is hardly a quarter of a mile of woods before you will come to the river."

"My idea is to cut our way through these woods. Once upon the banks of the river, we will speedily construct a log raft which will float the Cyclone. We will then have a floating battery, as it were, and if we do not drive the foe to the wall, it will be our fault."

"Dat am a grand idee!" cried Pomp, cutting a pigeon wing. "I done reckon Marse Frank could capture Ireland from de English, if he jes' made up his mind to."

"Whurroo!" shouted Barney. "Frank Reade, Jr., ar' jist de man that cud do that same. Oid loike to take the Cyclone to Hireland an' dhrove out the blasted usurper of me ancisters."

But Dr. Vaneyke looked puzzled.

"I have no doubt of your success, Frank," he said, quietly, "but may I ask you one question?"

"Well?"

"How can we hope to make a sufficient roadway for the Cyclone to the river, through that fearful yielding morass?"

The young inventor laughed.

"It must be that you never heard of a corduroy road, doctor?" he replied, pleasantly.

"I must confess that I never have," replied the scientist, vaguely. "We are never too old to learn, you know."

"That is very true. Well, to make a long story short, a corduroy road is made with felled trees, laid crosswise in the mud. They will sink to a level with the mire and support a tremendous weight before they will go an inch deeper. To avoid jarring the Cyclone's machinery, I propose to cover the logs with boughs. This will make a very good road as you will see when it is completed."

The doctor grasped the idea at once. He bowed his head and said:

"I am satisfied."

Frank was not a believer in procrastination. He was determined that operations should begin at once, and, accordingly, directed Pomp to swing the Cyclone's head around, so that the electric gun would point into the swamp.

Then he trained the gun upon the nearest tree. It was a mighty forest monarch, but a bolt from the destroyer severed its trunk and laid it low. Other trees succumbed for quite a distance into the swamp, a literal pathway being hewn through the timber.

Then Barney and Pomp went ahead with keen axes and hewed off the branches and straightened the roadway. In a few hours a road had been made some distance into the swamp, which was quite passable for the Cyclone.

But it was yet slow work, and three days passed before the banks of the river were reached. All this while the outlaws had not shown themselves.

There was little doubt but that Hernando and his men had joined Coleman. Whether they were aware of Frank Reade, Jr.'s plans or not, was not known.

The corduroy road had proved a success. In three days a distance had been covered, which, with ordinary labor, would have required weeks. The Cyclone had been transported from the open prairie to the very verge of the swamp river.

And now began the important work of constructing the raft. All worked at this, and none harder than Duncan Snyder, the detective. When it was completed, under Frank Reade, Jr.'s skilled directions, it was a marvel in its way.

It was made of logs, running transversely over each other in layers, and had a sharp bow in front and a rudder. The wheels of the Cyclone were rigged with paddles, so that the raft could be propelled with electric power.

It was really a float for the Cyclone, which, although rigged for the crossing of rivers and lakes, Frank did not think advisable to have remain in the water such an extended length

of time as would be required to attack the outlaws' stronghold.

The Cyclone was now really a floating battery, as after the launching she moved away into the stream. Hardly a week had been consumed in all this mighty work.

The paddle wheels and rudder worked admirably, and the raft was easily managed. There was now nothing to hinder an attack upon the stronghold.

It happened that the launch took place in the early morning. Satisfied that the Cyclone was all safe to proceed to battle, Frank decided to lose no time. Accordingly, he gave the order to Barney to start the dynamo.

The Cyclone started away down the river buoyed up by the raft. Everybody on board was on the *qui vive*, and armed with their rifles, were on deck.

Down the river went the raft rapidly. Bend after bend was made, and after some time they came at length in view of the stockade which fronted upon the river.

Those on board the Cyclone saw an armed guard on the stockade. At sight of the Cyclone he fired his rifle and dropped out of sight.

"He will give the alarm!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, excitedly. "We shall not surprise them!"

It was Frank's intention to float down to the stockade and demand a surrender. If this was not forthcoming then he would batter down the stockade with the electric gun.

But at this moment a thrilling cry went up from all. The cause was apparent.

At an angle of the stockade a number of the outlaws appeared. It was seen that they had a field cannon, which they quickly trained upon the Cyclone. A shot from the cannon would be likely to ruin the delicate electric machinery, for the Cyclone was not proof against cannon balls. All realized this, aghast with horror.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A SURRENDER.

CERTAINLY a shot from the cannon would easily perforate the hull of the Cyclone. It would be a dire calamity.

Not one on board the Cyclone but realized this and were powerless to help it, for the moment. Even as they stood on deck, paralyzed with the force of the reflection, a puff of white smoke leaped from the muzzle of the piece and the next moment a heavy cannon ball just grazed the hull of the Cyclone.

"My God!" gasped Dr. Vaneyke. "If they hit us, we are lost!"

"They must not be given time to fire again," cried Duncan Snyder. "Pick them off with your rifles!"

"Golly! Why didn't dis chile eber tink of dat afo?" cried Pomp.

"Begorra, its thick-headed I am to be sure," cried Barney. "Have at the blasted omad-houns."

All fired a volley at the distant gunners and not without effect. Two of them threw up their arms and fell.

But the others were seen hastily swabbing out the gun. They would surely get the range this time and that meant the Cyclone's doom.

But Frank Reade, Jr., had not been idle. He knew that all depended upon the quickest of action. That single cannon, possessed by the foe, must be silenced.

There was but one way to do it. He sprang down into the gun room quickly. It was but a moment's work to train the electric gun.

As his eye ran along the sight he saw that the foe were just ready to draw the lanyard. What followed happened all in a second of time.

There was a brilliant series of lightning flashes, the air seemed full of forked lightning, a terrific roar, and when the smoke cleared away the place where the threatening cannon had been was a tremendous hole in the ground.

A large section of the stockade was blown away, and a number of the foe were seen running for their lives across the island.

What folly for them to think of battling against such a terrific destroyer as the Electric Cyclone.

A wild cheer went up from Barney and Pomp, and the raft glided down to the spot where the breach in the stockade had been made.

Once again the electric gun sent a bolt across the island. It fell directly in the van of a number of fleeing outlaws, and raising a great mound of earth before them, caused them to retreat in dismay.

The Cyclone was now in an admirable position to command the island and its approaches. There, Frank Reade, Jr., located at a glance, and effectually closed the exits with a few shots from the electric gun.

Then a pause came. Frank knew well enough that the terrified foe would come to terms now.

And he was right. In a few moments a trembling wretch was seen approaching with a white flag in his hand.

As he came nearer the young inventor stepped out on deck.

"Well," he cried, sternly. "What will you have?"

"Are you Frank Reade, Jr.?"

"I am."

"What are your terms of surrender?"

"I demand that Madge Weston be delivered safely up to me. Also, that you deliver up your villainous leaders, Hernando and Coleman, as prisoners of war. They cannot save you now. If you do not accept these terms, I will blow you all into perdition."

The fellow trembled like an aspen leaf as he made reply:

"We would gladly do that if we could. But neither Miguel Hernando nor Carlos Coleman are with us now. They went away yesterday, taking the girl with them."

Frank Reade, Jr., was astounded by this declaration. To say that he was disappointed would be a mild statement.

"Do you mean that?" he asked, sharply.

"On my honor," replied the truce-bearer.

"What shall we do, doctor?" asked Frank, despairingly, turning to Dr. Vaneyke. "I much feared that the villain would give us the slip in this manner."

"It is hard luck," muttered the scientist.

"Make sure first that this fellow speaks the truth," put in Snyder.

"Right!" cried Frank. "That is the proper thing to do."

He turned to the truce-bearer again.

"Understand, sir, that your life depends on whether you tell me the truth or not. Where has Coleman gone with the girl?"

"Indeed, that I do not know."

"Ah, why did he go off and leave you in the lurch?"

"Ah, he intended to return. For a week he has had spies watching your movements. This morning he concluded to remove the girl to another hiding-place. He did not expect an attack from you so soon."

An idea occurred to Frank.

"When will he return?"

"We were expecting him at any moment," was the reply.

"Enough. Your lives will all be spared upon

the condition that you all come peaceably down here and lay down your weapons. You will then be expected to take an oath to leave these parts forever."

"We will be only too glad to do that," was the eager cry of the truce-bearer.

He hastened away and very soon half a hundred rough men came down to the river bank and laid down their weapons. Barney and Pomp went ashore and held guard over them.

Dr. Vaneyke remained aboard the Cyclone, while Frank and Snyder, the detective, proceeded to scour the island.

oners? We cannot keep them on board the Cyclone."

"By no means. Make them take an oath never to fight with Coleman or Hernando again."

"They will break it!"

"Possibly. There is no other way, though. If we can cut them off from their leaders effectually, we may fear nothing more from them."

"You are right. Our best plan is to return to the prairie. No time is to be lost."

Thus decided, Frank moved expeditiously. In a few moments he had compelled the prisoners

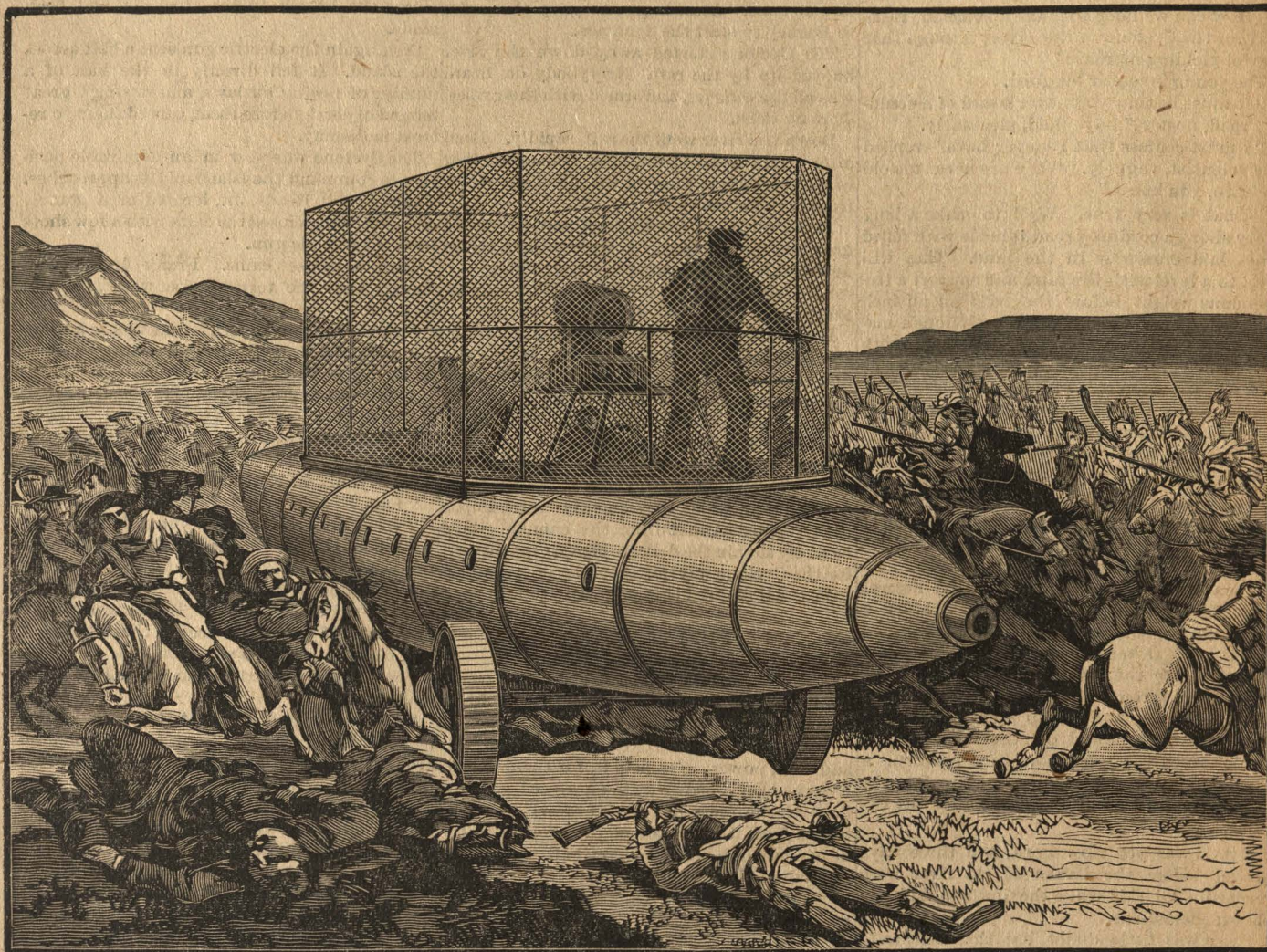
CHAPTER XLV.

PURSUED BY FIRE.

THE dismay and surprise of Frank Reade, Jr., was great when he was confronted with this new peril. Of course, he at once understood its origin.

All gazed aghast at the flames swiftly mounting upwards. Through the forest the fire was running like mad.

It would be easy to blow away the obstruction with the electric gun. But this did not settle the question of escape. Already the forest fire had cut off any return to the prairie.



Suddenly, and with a resistless force, the Cyclone swept down into the midst of the battle, separating the two forces like a dividing knife. The effect was thrilling in the extreme.

After an ineffectual search they came to the conclusion that the truce-bearer had told the truth. Hernando and Coleman, with Madge, had gone.

"If I thought they intended to return," said Frank, with an inspiration, "we would remain here and trap them."

"I have little faith that they will return," affirmed Snyder. "Some warning will reach them before they enter the swamp. Our best move is to scatter this band of rascals, and be off in hot pursuit of those who have escaped."

"Perhaps you are right," agreed Frank. "It is certain that some of the outlaws escaped before I got the Cyclone in position to rake the island."

"Of course. They will be outside to warn Coleman. Oh, he will not come back here, rest assured."

"But what shall we do with all those pris-

to take an oath never to serve under their former leaders again, and then dispersed them unarmed into the swamp.

Once more on board the Cyclone, they made their way back to the corduroy road. Here the Cyclone was removed from the raft and started for the prairie.

The distance was only a quarter of a mile, but before it had been half covered, a thrilling surprise was revealed. The road was suddenly found to be blocked to a height of twenty feet with fallen trees, logs and stumps.

What was worse, these were discovered to be on fire. Also from the distance through the forest the roar of flames could be heard surging among the resinous pines. It was a daring trick of Coleman's. Returning to find his stronghold captured, he had adopted this means of retaliation. It meant destruction to the Cyclone, and was a position from which it seemed not easy to extricate the electric wonder.

There was but one avenue of escape, and this was in the direction of the river. Altogether the situation was a desperate one.

It was likely that the fire would destroy the corduroy road. In that case, how would the Cyclone be able to return to the prairie?

Of course, a new road could be built, but this would require time, and just now time was valuable.

But there was no other alternative, so Frank ran the Cyclone back to the raft. Aboard of this they put out into the river and returned to the island.

Not one of the outlaws was there. Long since they had undoubtedly rejoined their leader and comrade beyond the confines of the swamp.

In this event what had been gained by the expedition into the swamp? Frank asked himself this question and was inclined to pronounce the expedition a failure.

To be sure, they had driven Coleman from his most inaccessible hiding-place, but to pay for it, they had run into a very dangerous trap. No wonder that all felt chagrined and discouraged. All but Frank Reade, Jr. He was one whom reverses could not daunt.

He was striving to find a way out of the difficulty and was determined to succeed. Meanwhile, the great peril momentarily drew nearer.

The whole swamp forest was now on fire. The conflagration was mostly confined to the dry branches and upper foliage of the pines, but it made a formidable conflagration all the

"My God! We have run aground, Frank!"

But Frank Reade, Jr., was of a different opinion. He knew that they were in the middle of the stream, that the current was sluggish and turbid here, indicating deep water.

He went rapidly forward with a long pole in his hand. He ran this down into the water.

"Just as I thought," he declared; "there is no bottom here for twenty feet. It is something far different."

"Ah!" exclaimed the doctor, with an inkling of the truth, "an obstruction——"

"Yes; and placed here to keep any boat from

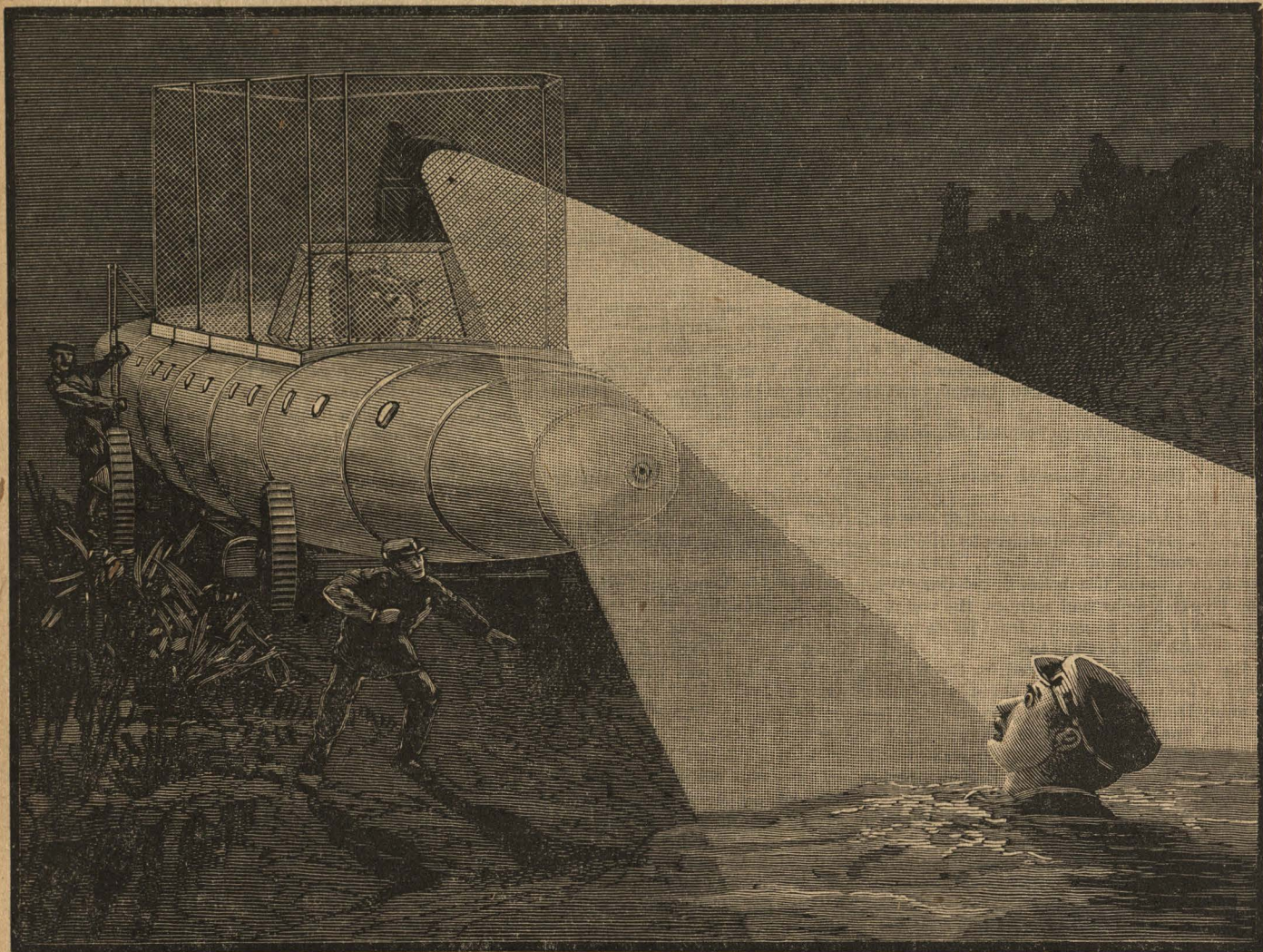
sharply. "Marse Frank am jes' gwine to gib me de fust chaine."

"Ah, go on, yez sun-burned monkey. Do yez reckon ye'silf the aquil of a rale gintleman from the ould sod, loike mesilf? Phwat are yez ancisters, anyway? Misther Frank would niver give yez the preference."

Pomp's eyes were like saucers.

"Yo' jes' don' want fo' to insult me ag'in, I'ish," he spluttered. "I break yo' jaw jes' as sho' as yo' lib."

"Go paint ye'silf white, yez misfit av a hay-



In a brief space of time the gangway was lowered, and both approached the object on the ground. Then they saw and recognized the features. "My God!" almost shrieked Dr. Vaneyke. "It is Frank Reade, Jr."

same. Every moment it was sweeping nearer the river. The stream was not a broad one, and the Cyclone could not hope to escape the flames by anchoring in mid-stream. There was one way of possible escape.

This was to flee before the flames. Frank saw this and finally decided to accept it.

He knew that the river ran into the prairie many miles beyond. The fire had assumed frightful proportions, and as he gazed at the mountainous masses of flame and smoke sweeping down upon them, Frank quickly decided to accept the chance of meeting rapids and follow the river.

Accordingly, the raft was headed down the stream and good progress was made for a ways. Then there was a sudden jolt and a jerking stop. The Cyclone's wheel spun around in the water, but the raft would not move.

A cry of despair went up from Dr. Vaneyke's lips.

coming up the river. Danger was not looked for from above. Ah, I thought so!"

The pole in Frank's hands had come in contact with the obstruction. It was easy to tell by the feeling what was its nature.

"It is a heavy chain," he declared. "It would suffice in keeping back an ordinary boat until it could be cut. Barney, shut off the dynamos, and you and Pomp report here at once."

"Ay, sor!" cried the Hibernian, obeying the order with alacrity.

As he rushed into the engine-room, Pomp came out of the pilot-house. Both were at Frank's side to report very quickly.

"Shure, sor, it's a chain, is it?" cried Barney. "I'm thinkin' we'll have to wurruk sharp afore the foire overtakes us. What shall I do, Misther Frank?"

"Jes' yo' hol' on a minnit, I'ish," cried Pomp,

thin. Don't yez think yez kin froighten Barney O'Shea?"

Pomp lowered his head and made a spasmodic rush for his tormentor. But Frank Reade, Jr., interposed just in time to check the ruction.

"Come, enough of that!" he cried, authoritatively. "This is no time for fooling. We are in great danger. Pomp, you are a good swimmer?"

"Golly, Marse Frank, jes' yo' try me!" cried the zealous dorky.

"I will. Do you see that tree against the bank over there?"

"I jes' does, Marse Frank."

"Well, I believe this chain is fastened to that tree. I wish you would swim over there and see."

"All right, Marse Frank."

Off went Pomp's coat and vest. He also threw off his shoes.

"To make sure of the thing," continued Frank, "take an ax along with you. It is easier to cut down the tree than to file the chain. Do you see the point?"

"Prezactly, Marse Frank. I done see it jes' as plain as dat fishman's nose." Barney scowled. "I jes' break dat chain mighty quick."

The next moment Pomp was in the water with the ax strapped to his shoulders. He swam straight to the tree in question and soon reached it.

"De chain am yere, Marse Frank!" he shouted, cheerily, and began work at once with the ax. The heavy blows told, for as the chips flew the forest monarch began to groan and tremble.

Frank turned and looked anxiously at the great wall of fire and smoke in their rear.

"It looks dubious, Frank," ventured Dr. Vaneyke. "If we escape from this predicament we will be lucky."

"We shall escape," declared Frank.

"Do you feel sure of that?"

"Yes."

"I do not."

The young inventor gave a start.

"Why?" he asked, casually.

"There are many reasons. In the first place, we shall be almost sure to encounter other obstructions in the river."

"Very true," declared Frank. "Yet at any moment we may reach an enlargement of the river's banks where we can float beyond the reach of the flames."

"I pray that we may," replied the scientist, but in a hopeless way.

Frank Reade, Jr., however was not a bit discouraged.

All this while Pomp had been industriously at work. He had taken care to fell the tree so that it would fall into the forest. Also he had cut it at a point just below the chain. When the tree fell, as he had planned, the weight of the heavy chain dragged it from its clasp upon the smooth trunk of the tree.

But Pomp had not looked for the thrilling peril which ensued. The chain was jerked forcibly from its hold as the tree fell. As luck had it, one of the broken links caught in Pomp's clothing, and as the chain was whisked into the river, the ponderous weight took him with it.

In a twinkling he went under the water, pulled down by the chain.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw this catastrophe, and gave his faithful servitor up for lost.

CHAPTER XLVI.

FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE.

THE shrewd outlaw, Carlos Coleman, had not been unaware of the operations of the Cyclone while cutting its way into the swamp.

Spies were constantly on the watch, and every movement was reported to him. At first he had been incredulous as to Frank Reade, Jr.'s success in making the corduroy road.

But as it became a better established fact he became greatly agitated and began to cast about for a change of base. About this time Hernando turned up.

The ranchero was not yet recovered from his experience aboard the Cyclone, and he could not speak of the electric wonder without a shiver of dread.

"Caramba!" he gritted with a shrug of his shoulders. "That Frank Reade, Jr., is in league with the devil. Everything you touch of his has a million sharp needles in it and some invisible force knocks you down like a ten pin. Curse him! I'd like to get a lariat around his white neck. Ugh! how I'd twist it!"

Coleman laughed at this bloodthirsty declaration.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, contemptuously. "It is nothing but electricity, and if I only knew a little more about the mechanism of the thing I could run it just as well as he does."

Hernando's eyes bulged.

"If you only could, Carl," he exclaimed, excitedly, "what a trick it would be for us. We could capture the whole of Mexico."

"Rest easy," said the outlaw, coolly. "We will yet find a way to turn the tables on this Mr. Frank Reade, Jr. But just now we are in a bad box."

"Eh? How so?"

"Well, we are on this condemned island in the swamp. If he succeeds in getting down here on that raft they're building, he can jest blow us to perdition."

Hernando nodded his head.

"Per Dios! he will succeed!" he muttered.

"The devil aids him."

"Well, then I must do something at once."

"You're right, senior. But—pardon my curiosity. What do you intend to do with this American girl? Is there a good chance for a big ransom?"

"Deuce take the ransom," gritted Coleman.

"I intend to marry her."

The ranchero's face lit up.

"Oh, I see!" he remarked, quietly. "It is sweet to be in love. But—the dove is not of the willing kind. She is shy and obstinate, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Ah, well, that is easy managed. After she is tamed she will be most faithful to you. Well, I congratulate you, senior, but I have never seen the woman yet whom I would steal."

"You Mexicans are faithless chaps," said Coleman, roughly. "You would have a woman but for a transient period. Then your fancy would demand something new."

"Is not that the proper way to love, Senior Americano?"

"Perhaps so. At any rate, I am in love with one now. I can tell better in time whether I'll stick to her or not."

The outlaw laughed sycophantly. The Mexican showed his white teeth affably.

"But this don't settle the question at all," continued Coleman. "I have got to devise some trick to outwit that confounded inventor. What can I do?"

"Perhaps I can make a suggestion to help you, senior."

"What is it?"

"Have you not on this island at present a cannon?"

"Yes."

"One shot from that should destroy the delicate machinery of the Cyclone. I jest think I'd try it, senior."

"Good!" cried Coleman, with inspiration.

"That is a capital idea. But—"

"What?"

"While there is a possibility that by standing our ground we might wreck the Cyclone, there is also a chance that we might not. In that case we would be in danger of being captured and—"

"Well?"

"I don't want the girl to fall into the hands of Frank Reade, Jr."

A light broke across Hernando's face.

"I have it!" he cried. "Give me two men. I will take the girl to the mountains to an old camp there. When ye get ready, ye can come up and get her. If ye lick the Cyclone, all right. If not, why the girl is safe. See?"

Coleman caught the inspiration.

"Good!" he cried. "You will do that for me, Hernando?"

"I will, senior."

"Enough! I will go with you as far as the base of the hills."

The outlaw at once gave an order for the saddling of three horses. Then Madge was brought forth from her prison quarters.

Though pale and a trifle worn, she did not look much the worse for her confinement. She vouchsafed no speech or resistance as she was lifted upon the horse and bound to the saddle.

When this had been accomplished Coleman and Hernando, with two of the outlaws for extra escort, set out for the prairie.

Coleman's direction to his men were to await his return. He did not anticipate an immediate attack from the Cyclone, and fully expected to be back before it was made. As we have seen, in this he failed.

Threading the bridge path through the swamp, they soon came out upon the prairie. They struck out at once for the hills. After some hours' ride they were reached in safety.

Here, at their base, Coleman turned back.

"I will send a courier up to ye very soon, Miguel!" he cried, as he galloped away. "Look out for the girl."

"Ay, senior, that I will," replied the Mexican.

Coleman galloped back as swiftly as possible to the swamp. Before he reached the opening of the bridge path a premonition of disaster struck him.

Just as he was about to enter it, a number of his men appeared. They were without arms, and had just come from the island where Frank Reade, Jr., had paroled them.

Coleman listened to their account with interest. He realized that another of his strongholds had been broken up, but he also reflected with a certain degree of triumph, that he had outwitted Frank Reade, Jr., in spiriting Madge away just in the nick of time.

The outlaws now proved their loyalty to their oaths given to Frank Reade, Jr., by at once joining Coleman in an act which the outlaw chief insanely hoped would result in the total destruction of his dreaded foes.

"They are in the swamp!" he cried, with inspiration. "We are fools if we allow them to come out alive. Come on, men! Tear up the roadway and fire the woods. Death to Frank Reade, Jr., and destruction to the Cyclone!"

With a cheer the lawless gang followed Coleman's lead.

It was but quick work for them to tear up a part of the corduroy road. Then they fired the woods.

With fiendish cunning, Coleman saw that the wind was in the right direction to entrap the Cyclone. Thus it happened that Frank Reade, Jr., found himself confronted by this new and deadly peril.

But Miguel Hernando with Madge, had not struck in with such good fortune as Coleman. After parting company with the outlaw chief he had struck into a mountain path. After following this for a few miles a catastrophe occurred.

Suddenly one of the two outlaws threw up his arms and fell from his horse. An arrow had passed through his neck. The next moment his companion fell with half a dozen arrows in different parts of his body.

Hernando would have wheeled about and made retreat, but from every side there burst forth a yelling horde of savages. They completely surrounded Hernando and Madge.

It was a thrilling moment. Madge turned deadly pale but did not faint. She was nerved

to the worst and was resolved to bravely meet her fate.

In a twinkling both were prisoners in the center of a triumphant concourse of savage Apaches. This was hardly an improvement upon Madge's hard fate. It was literally from the frying pan into the fire and her heart sank. What would be the end?

CHAPTER XLVII.

DOWN THE RIVER.

THE instant that Frank Reade, Jr., saw Pomp pulled under the water by the heavy chain, a wild cry of alarm pealed from his lips.

"Help! come all!" he cried, excitedly. "Pomp must be saved."

But Barney had seen the catastrophe as well as Frank Reade, Jr.

"Begorra, I'll save him too!" cried the whole-souled Irishman, as he threw off his coat. But happily he had no occasion to go to Pomp's rescue. That sable-hued gentleman suddenly bobbed up from the river's depths like a cork.

A cheer went up from all as they saw he was safe. In another moment he was being helped aboard the Cyclone.

The hold which the chain had on him was broken when the bottom was reached, and Pomp came to the surface. It was an almost miraculous escape.

The heavy chain now lay at the bottom of the river. There was no reason now why the Cyclone should not proceed.

"Golly! I don't tink my day had come," cried Pomp, as he shook himself like a Newfoundland dog. This resulted in giving Barney a sudden cold sprinkling, but from the mischievous twinkle in Pomp's eye it was easy enough to guess that this was not accidental.

"Begorra, but ye've a bloody bit av cheek to shpill all yer dhirty wather over me," cried Barney, angrily. "I've a moind to tache ye manners, naygur."

"Huh! Yo' no need to be in de way, I'ish," retorted Pomp, mock seriously. "I jes' gib yo' fair warnin'. Dat's a' right, amn't it?"

"Be jabers, it ain't roight, me foine birrud," cried Barney. "Luke at me shirt, now, an' see the dhirty wather all over it. Oi'll have satisfaction, or me name ain't Barney O'Shea."

"Huh! I done tink yo' name'll be Dennis, I'ish, if yo' touch me."

Barney, however, was determined to get square with Pomp, and he seized the first opportunity. As Pomp turned to go below, Barney threw out his foot and tripped him up.

Pomp went down like a barrow of bricks. He scraped his flat nose on the Cyclone's deck, and brought his head up with terrific force against the hatchway. But this did not hurt him in the least.

It had the effect of maddening him, however. In a moment he was on his feet, and lowering his head, made a rush at Barney.

Had the Celt been wise he would have gained a position of safety long before. But he had paused to indulge in uproarious laughter and so got caught.

Pomp was quick and his attack could not be avoided. Straight as an arrow he rushed at his tormentor. His head took Barney full in the rear, just as the Irishman had turned to flee.

The result was comical. Barney was impelled forward like a stone out of a catapult. He was utterly unable to stop or change his course.

As fate had it the cabin stairs were just before him. He could not even lift his feet to hit the stairs squarely, so was hurled their full length. Pomp had not seen the trap and he

went down after Barney, both landing in a tangled heap at the foot of the stairs.

Dr. Vaneyke and Duncan Snyder, as well as Enid, had seen the whole affair. They laughed immoderately, and even Frank Reade, Jr., joined in the laughter as he came out of the pilot house.

Had not Barney and Pomp been two tough and elastic bodies they would have been seriously injured. As it was they scrambled to their feet, and fearing a reprimand from Frank, glided away to their duties.

The raft was now drifting down the river. The water thus far had seemed deep enough, and no trouble was encountered. By means of poles collision with rocks or fallen trees were averted.

The fire, meanwhile, was roaring like a thousand thunders in the rear. To be overtaken by it meant certain destruction. Yet the raft made but slow progress.

"Something must be done," cried Frank Reade, Jr., desperately. "We must get ahead faster or we shall certainly be overtaken."

"Wait!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, suddenly. "Listen to that."

From the distance down the river, sure enough, there came the sound of roaring rapids. It was in one sense welcome, in another sense it foreboded disaster.

If the raft could succeed in running the rapids safely, well and good. But there was great danger that it would not.

Soon the current became swifter, and the raft gained greater speed.

All hands were now out on the raft with poles, and Frank Reade, Jr., shouted:

"Stand by, every one. Keep the raft steady and we will trust to luck to run the rapids safely."

On swept the raft. Now it swept around a bend and a good view of the rapids was had. To Frank's relief he saw a good channel in the center, and into this the raft was guided.

The safety of the Cyclone, the lives of all on board, depended upon the safe passage of the rapids. Every man was on the alert, and it was a suspenseful time.

Down into the surging, plunging waters the Cyclone was carried. Now the raft was carried upon the top of some high wave to descend between jagged rocks, to grate and grind over some obstruction. Once one end swung around until it seemed as if it would strike the shore and incur the force of the descending waste of water.

But by good fortune this was cleared, and the next moment the raft, with its precious load, glided down into clear water.

The rapids were safely passed. This danger was averted, but what was ahead none knew.

The current was swifter at this point, and the country less swampy, being more of a forest, with high banks. The raft was carried on rapidly, and as time passed, gradually they began to emerge into the open country.

Soon the plains were about them on either hand, and Frank Reade, Jr., with a glowing face, cried:

"Fortune is yet with us, friends. We have certainly crawled out of the very jaws of death."

"I should say so!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "Just look back where we came from."

Truly it was an appalling scene to view. The entire forest, land and swamp region, was one vast, thundering mass of fire. It was a most sublime and awful spectacle. High in the air rolled mountainous clouds of smoke and flame.

The Cyclone would certainly have been de-

stroyed had it remained in the swamp. It was a lucky escape.

"The next question is to get ashore!" cried Frank Reade, Jr. "That looks like a good place to land. Pomp, Barney, turn the raft into that little cove. Steady, all, with the poles."

The famous inventor's commands were quickly obeyed. The raft swung into a little cove in the banks, and then Pomp and Barney sprang ashore, and made it fast with ropes.

It was an easy matter to rig a gangway for the Cyclone to run ashore on. In a short time the electric wonder was on the smooth prairie, ready for another cruise after the outlaws.

"It seems good to be once more on terra firma!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, joyfully. "I will admit that I felt shaky all the while we were in that infernal swamp."

"Once more we can run on level ground," agreed Frank. "I share your sentiments, doctor. Ah, what was that?"

Both gave a start and exchanged glances. They had come out at the base of the hills which the river skirted on emerging from the swamp.

The sound which had attracted the startled attention of both was a series of sharp reports up in the hills. They were quite comprehensive to their practiced ears.

"Why, it is the rattle of firearms!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., in surprise. "What does it mean?"

"It means that some sort of a scrimmage is going on up there."

"You are right."

"What shall we do?"

"Investigate, of course. All aboard! Barney, set the dynamos at work. Pomp, set your course for the hills. We shall soon find out what is going on up there."

The orders were given sharp and quick and were quickly obeyed.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE WOUNDED COURIER.

THE Cyclone was almost instantly got under way. Speeding rapidly over the intervening prairie, the hills were soon reached.

The sounds of the firing were now quite plain, and it was certain that strife of some sort was going on. The curiosity of all on board the Cyclone was aroused.

"Do you imagine that it is the outlaws and the Indians?" asked Dr. Vaneyke, as he joined Frank forward of the wheel-house.

"I can hardly venture an opinion," replied the famous inventor, slowly. "It is all a mystery at present."

"We shall soon ascertain."

"Yes, and until then we should wait patiently."

"Begorra, it's a foine racket they're makin' up there, anyway," put in Barney who had come up from the engine-room. "Whisht now! phwat would yez be afther calling that, Mis-ther Frank? Shure, it luks like the smoke av the battle, an' be jabers, it's comin' this way, or me name ain't Barney O'Shea."

Barney pointed to a narrow pass in the hills as he spoke. A white cloud was rolling up into the air, and Dr. Vaneyke cried:

"Sure enough, Frank! What does that mean?"

Frank Reade, Jr., gave one glance at the distant cloud and ejaculated:

"That is not smoke—it is dust."

Dr. Vaneyke looked surprised and Barney rubbed his eyes vigorously.

"Be jabers, it's losin' me eyesight intoirely, I am!" he cried. "Shure I should know the dif-

ference betwixt an' bechune shmoke an' dust!"

"It certainly is dust," agreed the doctor.

"It is a horseman!" cried Frank. "He is coming this way."

A gust of wind had lifted the dust cloud and revealed the forms of man and horse. The animal was racing with all speed, and to the surprise of all on board the Cyclone, the rider appeared to be completely exhausted and hung wearily over the pommel of his saddle.

"Begorra, an' it's nigh done out he is, too!" cried Barney. "Phwat say yez, Misther Frank. Shall I tell the naygur to stheer for the poor sowl?"

"Yes," replied Frank, "and be quick about it, Barney."

"All right, sorr."

Barney vanished into the pilot-house, where he was heard haranguing Pomp, but the darky had heard Frank's order and had already changed the Cyclone's course.

Swiftly the Cyclone approached the rider, who did not see the electric wonder at once. When he did he reigned up his horse in a startled manner.

It was then seen that he was a man of medium stature and dressed in the uniform of a U. S. cavalryman. He wore the stripes of a sergeant upon his sleeve.

The Cyclone came to a halt not twenty yards from the rider. Then it was seen that he was pale and ghastly and covered with blood. His sword arm hung limply by his side and there were shot holes in his broad brimmed hat.

He gazed in blank amazement at the Cyclone. Frank Reade, Jr., stepped out onto the gang ladder and cried:

"What is the matter, friend? You look well played out."

"Who are you?" cried the cavalry sergeant, in astonishment. "What kind of a railroad on wheels is that you have there?"

"Well, I am Frank Reade, Jr., and this is my latest invention, the Electric Cyclone."

"The dickens you say! What are you doing in this part of the country?"

"Pursuing a gang of outlaws. But what is the matter with you?"

The sergeant gave a start, and spurred his horse nearer, crying:

"My God! there is not an instant to lose. One hundred men, Lieut. Lane's command, are hemmed in a small hole there in the hills by half a thousand fierce Apaches. Their ammunition is giving out, and they will all be murdered in cold blood unless I can get reinforcements in time."

"And where are you bound for help?" asked Frank, quickly.

"To our post some miles from here. I fear I will never be able to get back in time."

"Hold!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., in a voice of thunder, as the sergeant was about to dash away. "You need not go so far for reinforcements. Just show me the way to the scene of action. I can wipe out the whole redskin gang with one shot from my electric gun."

The wounded courier paused in doubt and amazement.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"I see you have a big gun there. But what do you mean by saying that it is an electric gun?"

"I will soon show you," replied Frank.

"Just drop from your horse and come on board. You are wounded and need care."

"No, I must decline. Until my comrades are reinforced I can stop at nothing."

"I will rescue them if you will but lead the way!" cried Frank.

"Do you mean that?"

"Of course I do."

"But—the reinforcement will be small. There are but few of you, and the Indians are half a thousand strong."

"I don't care if they are ten thousand strong. I can whip them. Come, waste no time, sergeant. Lead on!"

The wounded courier hesitated no longer.

"I will not come aboard!" he cried. "I will lead the way. Now, follow me, and Heaven help you if you do not carry out your promise!"

He put spurs to his horse and rode back into the pass. The Cyclone followed with all speed.

Through the pass the electric wonder dashed, and then came upon a thrilling scene. In a small crevice in the mountain wall the little company of cavalrymen were holding at bay a force many times their number. The shots were flying thick and fast, and the rocks behind which the devoted soldiers lay were crimsoned with their blood.

All sprung up as the Cyclone appeared. The courier dropped from his horse and saluted a tall, handsome young officer, who regarded the Cyclone in amazement.

"Well, Sergeant, Wallace!" he cried, sharply.

"Where are your reinforcements?"

"Here!" cried the sergeant, sweeping a gesture toward the Cyclone. "Here is a man who says he can whip the whole Apache nation."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Lieut. Lane, for he it was. "What kind of a machine do you call that, Wallace?"

"I don't know, sir," replied the sergeant.

"The man who owns it calls it an Electric Cyclone. I believe it is run by electricity."

At this moment Frank Reade, Jr., appeared at the door in the netting. It chanced that there was a lull in the battle just now. Frank saluted the young officer, and said, politely:

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"Lieut. Lane, of the U. S. army," was the quick reply.

"I am glad to meet you, Lieut. Lane. I am Frank Reade, Jr."

"What!" exclaimed the amazed officer.

"You are not the wonderful inventor of the electric gun, for the secret of which the government would pay such a fabulous price?"

"Yes, I am," replied Frank, modestly.

"And I have that electric gun with me. You are in a tight box?"

"My God! we are in the jaws of death. I don't see what can save us."

"Do not borrow further trouble, I can save you."

"You!" cried the lieutenant with surprise.

"Ah, I forgot your wonderful gun, Mr. Reade. You are a hero to thus come to our rescue."

"Do not mention it. I will teach those murderous Apaches a lesson they will not soon forget."

"They are the curse of the south-west!" cried Lieut. Lane, forcibly. "Ah, there is their battle yell. They are coming to a fresh attack."

Frank gave hurried orders to Barney and Pomp. The Cyclone was run up to a breach in the rocks. Here an easy view of the position of the savages was had.

They could be seen swarming like bees over the rocks below. They formed a splendid target, and Frank Reade, Jr., smiled grimly as he went into the gun-room.

"I will give them a surprise party," he muttered.

He speedily turned the deadly gun upon the mass of savages. A surprise was indeed in store for them.

CHAPTER XLIX.

REPULSING THE SAVAGES.

THE Electric Cyclone had appeared upon the scene just in the nick of time. That charge of the savages was a terrific one, and it would have carried destruction into the midst of the cavalymen, who were out of ammunition.

But Frank Reade, Jr., in the gun-room, trained the electric gun and awaited the right moment. Then he pressed the electric key.

The result was sublime and indescribable. It was as if the bolt of a Jove had been hurled into the midst of the savages.

They were swept away before that mighty electric bolt like chaff before the wind. For a moment they wavered, but again came on in a yelling horde.

Once again Frank trained the gun. Once again the terrific bolt swept away scores of the terrified foe. Terrified now, for without further hesitation they broke ranks and fled precipitately. The field was clear for the time being, and the command of Lieut. Lane was saved.

But the Apaches had not abandoned the conflict. They still waited at a respectful distance and in excited conference.

The appearance of the Cyclone, however, had awed them, and somewhat dampened their ardor. They preferred to hold a council before venturing another attack.

The cavalymen had witnessed the work of the electric gun with amazement. It far excelled any agent of destruction which they had ever seen.

"By Jupiter!" cried one of them excitedly, "I don't wonder that Uncle Sam is willing to pay richly for the secret of such a gun. It beats the world."

Lieut. Lane, quivering with joy and gratitude, came to the gang-stairs of the Cyclone. Frank met him there and asked him aboard.

"Wonderful!" cried the handsome young officer. "I tell you, Uncle Sam ought to have the secret of that gun, Mr. Reade."

"And Uncle Sam shall have it, if ever the hour of necessity comes," declared the famous inventor, candidly. "Neither shall he pay for it. If the hour ever comes that my country is in danger, you will find Frank Reade, Jr., and his gun at the front, depend on that."

"You could sweep an army out of existence," declared Lane.

"Possibly. But I did not invent the gun for nations to fight over. It was for my own uses. If my country ever needs the secret, I shall give it, free of charge."

"That is becoming in a loyal citizen," said Lieut. Lane, with a bow. But—this wonderful carriage of yours—the Electric Cyclone—truly a fit name for such a wonderful invention!"

Frank gazed apprehensively in the direction of the distant savages. But they did not show any inclination to make an immediate attack.

"If you will come aboard," he said, politely, "I will show you the workings of the Cyclone with great pleasure."

"Indeed, I thank you," declared Lieut. Lane, with alacrity. "It will give me great pleasure."

Frank took him over the Cyclone and showed him its wonderful mechanism. The young officer was delighted.

"It is simply wonderful, and reflects great credit upon you as an inventor, Mr. Reade," he declared.

"I consider it a good piece of work," said Frank, modestly.

"I should say it was. But, may I venture to ask, what mission has brought you so far from home and into this great wilderness of No Man's Land?"

"Certainly!" replied Frank. "I am here in pursuit of a gang of outlaws, led by one Carlos Coleman."

"I have heard of him."

"He has in his power at present a young lady named Madge Weston, whom I am trying to rescue. Ah! here is her sister now. I will introduce you."

"With much pleasure," replied the lieutenant, gallantly.

At this moment Enid appeared on deck. Frank led the young officer forward and introduced him. Enid seemed much impressed with Lieut. Lane's gallant manners, and the young officer seemed charmed with Enid's childish beauty.

Frank left them for a few moments. When he returned, Enid excused herself and returned to the cabin.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Lane, drawing a deep breath; "she is a very entertaining little miss, Mr. Reade. You say her sister is in Coleman's power?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am with you in your effort to rescue her. Myself and my command will co-operate with you, for it is incorporated in my orders that I wipe out any rascally gang of thieves which I may find in these parts."

"Indeed, I shall be glad of your co-operation," replied Frank, readily.

"All of my command are not with me," pursued Lieut. Lane. "Almost one hundred of my men are stationed at our camp, some fifty miles from here, at a place called Red Butte. When I say place I do not mean that it is a city or a town or settlement, but simply a wooded eminence. You understand?"

"Quite well."

"Have you any idea as to where Coleman is at present?"

Frank proceeded to give an account of their adventures in the Miaco Swamp. The lieutenant listened with deep interest.

"I am of the impression," he said, thoughtfully, after Frank had finished, "that you will find Coleman somewhere in the vicinity of that swamp yet."

"I have thought of that," agreed Frank.

"If I were in your place I would go back there at once."

"I think I will adopt that move," declared Frank. "It would certainly be most prudent. But first we must attend to the enemy in front of us."

"Right!" cried the lieutenant, "and by Jupiter! they are coming to the attack again! Shall I order my men to hold them in check?"

"No!" cried Frank. "I would suggest that you order your men to the rear. I can handle them quite well with the electric gun. Pray, lose no time."

"Ay, ay!" cried the lieutenant, as he left the Cyclone.

The cavalry fell back in good order before the oncoming of the savages. This seemed to give the foe fresh courage, and they came on with triumphant yells.

But Frank Reade, Jr., was at the electric gun. With trained eye he sighted it, and at the right moment pressed the electric key.

The next moment the air was full of darting lightning. A tremendous pile of earth arose, and buried fully half a score of the savages.

More than a dozen more were torn to pieces, and a great gap made in their ranks.

For a moment they wavered, but a giant chief in their van rallied them savagely, and they came on again. Frank smiled, and once again pressed the key.

This time the savages were mowed down by dozens. Nothing human could stand before such a terrible repulse, and with mad terror they broke and fled in wildest disorder to the cover of the rocks.

This terminated the battle. The savages did not return to the attack. The struggle was over and the Cyclone was again the victor.

Lieut. Lane rode up to the Cyclone's side, and saluting Frank Reade, Jr., said:

"We are ready to go now, sir."

"All right," replied Frank.

The Cyclone was turned about and started out of the pass. The troops were galloping on ahead. Soon they were out upon the prairie and with a clear course before them.

The Cyclone kept an even pace with the horses and in due course of time the swamp was reached. The place of entrance used by Coleman and his men was the stopping place.

Frank left the Cyclone in charge of Dr. Van-eyke, and accepting the loan of a horse, with Lieut. Lane and a number of the cavalymen rode into the swamp.

They followed the path used by the outlaws in their way to the island stronghold. They had nearly reached the island when a thrilling thing happened.

Suddenly a warning cry came from one of the soldiers. The next moment a flight of arrows came hurtling through the trees. Frank Reade, Jr.'s horse sank under him with an arrow in its breast.

CHAPTER L.

A PRISONER.

It was a startling moment. The attack was so sudden and unexpected that for a moment the little party were thrown into confusion.

As a result, a second flight of arrows killed three more horses and one of the soldiers. Then as Lieut. Lane and Frank were both dismounted the lieutenant gave the sharp order to the two remaining mounted soldiers.

"Ride back, Sullivan and Martin, for reinforcements. The rest of you take to the woods!"

The command was quickly obeyed. The two mounted men got out of the way just in time. The others on foot slipped behind trees and stumps for protection. Then a wild chorus of yells echoed through the tree tops, and all saw the savages in war-paint, coming through the woods to charge upon and capture them.

"Steady, boys!" cried Lieut. Lane, with the air of a veteran. "Separate all. Don't waste your fire. Take good aim and make every shot tell."

The soldiers gave the redskins a volley, which for a moment checked them. But they quickly came on again with great fury.

Frank Reade was ensconced behind a stump, and did not once think of retreat. He might easily have fallen back, and in time reached the Cyclone, but to do this would be to leave his companions in the lurch.

This was not in accordance with the young inventor's principles. He remained at his post, firing upon the savages as rapidly as he could.

The contest was a sharp and necessarily decisive one. Of course, the odds were too great to enable the soldiers to long hold the foe at bay.

The tall, powerful chief who urged them on was a conspicuous mark for rifle balls. Yet he

seemed to bear a charmed life, for none of them struck him. Several times Frank drew a bead on him, but without avail.

The yells of the savages and the crack of fire-arms made a horrid din. Lieut. Lane proved himself a hero, holding his men to their post in the very teeth of the overpowering foe.

Frank Reade, Jr., was so intensely interested in the contest that he became careless of his own safety. The result was that he soon found himself cut off from his companions and literally surrounded.

He then realized his impudence, but it was too late. The savages swarmed about him like bees.

He shot several of them, but they closed in on him and he was disarmed and made a prisoner in the twinkling of an eye. All this was done by the command of the tall, powerful chief.

Frank was hurried away through the swamp by half a dozen of the redskins. In a short while they had come to the banks of the river, where a number of canoes were found.

He understood now that the Indians had come up the river, very likely from the hills below. Landing upon the island they had collided with Lieut. Lane and his men at once.

Frank was held by two of the savages, while the others returned to the scene of the fray. Rifle shots and loud yells now indicated that the reinforcements had arrived.

In a short while the entire body of savages came down to the river's edge in retreat. The big chief directed their movements and all embarked in the canoes.

Frank was a passenger in one of the canoes which were allowed to drift down with the current. Rapid progress was made down the river and the pursuers distanced.

It happened that Frank Reade, Jr., was in the same canoe with the big chief, who regarded him curiously and triumphantly. Finally, the Apache leader bent over, and fixing a keen gaze on Frank, in a guttural voice exclaimed:

"White man heap fool. Come out of tepee on wheels, get caught by Injun. Ugh!"

"That's all right," said Frank, indifferently.

"White man's friends will rescue him."

"Wagh! no use. Nebber save white man," grunted the chief with a dark scowl. "Injun burn white man. Kill him! Nebber go back to his tepee on wheels."

"Look here, chief," said Frank, impressively, "if you dare to harm me, the tepee on wheels will chase you until you and your tribe are wiped out. See? Gitche Manitou is with the white man. He will punish Indian."

But the chief was dogged and sullen.

"White man kill Big Buffalo's warriors," he replied, moodily. "Chief no stand that. White man must die."

The Apache chief lapsed into a sullen silence after this. The canoes kept rapidly on down the river.

The course was the same as that pursued by the Cyclone on the raft, and when near the point where the Cyclone had disembarked, the landing was made.

By Big Buffalo's orders the canoes were secreted in the deep grass and then in a small clump of trees ponies were found.

These the savages mounted, Frank being tied upon one. Then with Big Buffalo riding in advance the party set out at a swift gallop for the hills.

The young inventor's sensations were not of the most pleasant. He was a prisoner in the power of the murderous Apaches. To be sure there was a chance that he might be res-

cued by his friends on the Cyclone. Yet he knew that he was really in deadly peril.

At a swinging gallop the Apaches rode on, until at length the hills were reached. Through a deep pass they rode and then skirting the wall of the mountain in a circuitous way they came finally into a small valley.

The Apache encampment was before them. Scores of tepees occupied an open space on the banks of a creek.

Big Buffalo gave guttural orders and the savages rode down into the village.

The usual scene presented itself of barking dogs, squaws, boys and braves and Frank's heart sank. He could see but little chance of escape from this place.

All would depend upon the efforts of those on board the Cyclone. Would they suspect his fate? Would they give him up for dead and abandon the quest?

If so, then his fate was sealed. But Frank still clung to hope. He knew Barney and Pomp well enough to be sure that they would leave no stone unturned to find their beloved employer.

Into the encampment they rode. Then at a motion from Big Buffalo, Frank was released from his position on the pony's back.

Once on his feet the Indians crowded about him, a jabbering, excited crew. They might have done him harm, but a few sharp orders from Big Buffalo caused them to fall back.

The big chief motioned to two of his braves, who seized Frank's arms and led him into one of the tepees.

He was hurled to the ground and uncere- moniously left alone. After a time he managed to rise to a sitting posture and crawl over to a pile of skins in one corner.

Frank was by no means inclined to give up to despair. He made a desperate effort to free his hands.

In this he was successful. Nature had endowed him with small hands and with some painful compression he was enabled to slip his bonds off his wrists. With an intense feeling of relief he rose to his feet and crept to the flap of the tepee.

Darkness was coming on rapidly.

At first Frank had thought of making a bold dash for liberty.

But two guards were before the tepee door, and any number of braves were about. It would be a foolhardy and almost fatal move, and he was obliged to abandon it.

He decided to wait for the midnight hour before attempting escape. He remained at the flap of the tepee, keeping a good watch.

While in this position he was the recipient of a thrilling shock. Suddenly across the open space between the tepee a number of savages marched.

Between them were two white captives. At sight of them a sharp gasp escaped Frank Reade, Jr.'s lips.

One was a young girl, pale and beautiful; the other was a tall and dark-visaged man.

"My soul!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr.; "what does it mean? Madge Weston and Miguel Hernando here! Will wonders never cease?"

It was certainly a thrilling surprise to the famous inventor.

CHAPTER LI.

THE GANTLET.

THERE was no mistake. Frank Reade, Jr.'s eyesight was good, and at that distance it was easy enough to recognize the two prisoners.

But the young inventor was mystified. How did it happen that they were prisoners here?

Had Coleman and his band encountered the Apaches and been wiped out by them? It certainly looked like it.

Frank watched the procession out of sight, and was so engrossed that he did not observe the opening of a flap on the other side of the tepee and the entrance of Big Buffalo.

The chief stopped in amazement, as he saw that his white prisoner had escaped from his bonds. He scowled darkly and gave a sharp whistle.

In an instant Frank turned in consternation to confront him. But before a word could be spoken half a dozen savages were in the tepee.

"Bind him!" thundered the chief.

In an instant the savages sprang upon Frank and hurled him to the ground. Resistance was useless, and in a few moments he was again bound hand and foot.

The chief's expression now changed to a hideous, leering grin. He walked up to Frank's prostrate form and gave it a kick.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Paleface no get away. Him die to-morrow. Big Buffalo has spoken."

With a wave of the chief's hand, the other savages went out. Without another word, Big Buffalo followed.

During the rest of his life, Frank Reade, Jr., never forgot that night in the tepee. It seemed ages in his cramped position before daylight came.

He knew that it would be useless to appeal to his captors, for they would only jeer at him. The tight thongs caused him great agony, but the night hours finally wore away and daylight came.

Sometime after the Indian village was astir, two Apache warriors entered the tepee.

One of them carried a haunch of roasted venison. This he threw at Frank's feet, and then loosed his bonds.

"Ugh! paleface eat," he grunted, in a surly way. "Him die to-day."

Frank was faint and exhausted. The venison was a trifle scorched, but yet quite tender and palatable, and Frank ate some of it. It gave him some strength, and he felt better.

The two savages sat in the tent, stolid and non-communicative. Finally the young inventor ventured to say:

"What will you do with your other white prisoner? What of the white girl?"

The two savages betrayed not in move nor gesture that they had heard the question. After an interval one of them said, stolidly:

"White squaw go to Big Buffalo's tepee. White man, he die."

Frank experienced a chill of horror as he thought of Madge Weston in the power of the brutal Apache chief. He compressed his lips and muttered to himself:

"She must be saved!"

After an hour had passed the sounds of a great commotion were heard outside. Loud yells and the beating of Indian drums were evidence that some sort of a festival had begun.

Instantly the two Indians sprang up and motioned to Frank to rise also. Once upon his feet the famous inventor was led out of the tepee.

A curious scene was spread before him. Several hundred painted savages were congregated in the center of the village, engaged in a wild, fantastic dance. The din raised was enormous, and the personal appearance of the howling barbarians at once frightful in the extreme.

Frank experienced a thrill as he saw Madge

in a group of squaws. Her hands were yet tied, and she looked pale and haggard.

She chanced to see Frank Reade, Jr., and her whole manner underwent a change. At first a light of joy and eagerness leaped from her eyes, but this was succeeded by despair as she saw that he was a prisoner.

She would have sprung to his side, but that two of the squaws pulled her back and gave her a savage jawing. But much of an understanding passed between Frank and Madge in the looks which they were enabled to give.

For some time the savage dance continued, then the beating of the drums ceased, and the warriors cast themselves upon the ground in sheer exhaustion.

At this juncture a couple of savages appeared, leading a white man between them. It was Miguel Hernando.

The rancho's yellow face was fairly livid in his terror. A silence fell upon the crowd as he appeared.

Big Buffalo stood in the center of the circle of prostrate warriors. His manner was imperative as he gave several guttural orders.

Hernando was led to a tree near and tied to it firmly. Then a score of the savages, stripped to the waist and armed with long knives, took their position about twelve paces distant.

One of them stepped forward, and swinging his knife lightly by the tip of the blade, threw it dexterously at the prisoner. A yell of terror burst from Hernando's lips.

But the knife did not touch him. It was imbedded in the bark of the tree not half an inch from his head.

His terrified cry brought a peal of uproarious laughter from the savages. Another eagerly advanced and threw his knife.

It quivered in the wood close to the other ear of Hernando.

The rancho seemed in a fainting condition so terrified was he. But this only had the effect of gratifying the savages.

One after another advanced and threw his knife.

None of them struck Hernando. It was merely a skilled contest to see who could throw the knife the nearest to the prisoner's face without touching it. The savages had no idea of striking the rancho with the knives. This was only the preliminary step in the torture intended for him.

In all the wild West or South there is no race of savages more bloodthirsty and fiendish than the Apaches. They are the natural enemies of the white man, and their methods of warfare and torture are horrible beyond description.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew this full well, and he turned sick at heart. Ever and anon he cast a glance up into the pass in the hills, half hoping against fate that the Cyclone would put in an appearance.

But it did not. At that moment his wonderful invention and his stanch friends were far beyond call.

The tree about Hernando's livid face bristled with the keen knives. One file of savages gave way to another in the knife throwing contest.

Once only was an error made, and then one of the keen blades severed Hernando's right ear from his head as smooth and clean as could well be imagined.

A fearful yell of pain and terror pealed from the villain's lips, and he tried hard to burst his bonds.

This was, however, only meat for the torturers, and they whooped and yelled in fiendish

joy. Frank Reade, Jr., turned his gaze away, horrified and sick with the spectacle.

After a time the braves seemed to tire of the knife-throwing contest. They retired from this and another dance was indulged in. Then preparations were made for another ordeal for the unfortunate Hernando.

Frank did not congratulate himself that he was not in Hernando's place, for he knew that he was only awaiting his turn.

The arrangements now being made by the savages were comprehensive to Frank and he shuddered.

Two long lines of the savages were placed five feet apart, leaving a lane of death between, for each savage was armed with a war-club. It was intended that the prisoner should run the gantlet.

Looking down that fearful lane, it was easy to believe that no man could pass through it alive. Hernando was led forward and his bonds were cut.

Two stalwart savages stood back of him with tomahawks. At the word if he did not start to run the gantlet they would brain him.

One might have said that it was death anyway. Yet the victim always runs, and Hernando was no exception.

CHAPTER LII.

A DARING ESCAPE.

THE word was given and Hernando with fearful desperation started upon the mad run for life. With a quick leap he was into the lane.

The ranchero was a powerful man with broad shoulders and muscles of steel. Single handed he was more than a match for any one of Big Buffalo's band.

Frank Reade, Jr., with bated breath watched the course of the prisoner. Despite the fact that Hernando was his most desperate foe he hoped to see him run the gantlet safely and earn his freedom.

Down into the bristling lane of death went the doomed man.

With the first shock four or five of the nearest savages were knocked down like puppets. Fiercely, madly the ranchero thrashed his way into the lane.

His life hung upon success and this impelled him to almost supernatural strength. He leaped and twisted, struck savage blows right and left and made a brave battle.

But the blows dealt him were fearful ones. They cut through his buckskin shirt, drawing the blood and rained upon his head with such force as to make him reel with dizziness and faintness.

Vainly he struggled forward. Every step faltered, every blow weakened. The horrid din in his ears, the clash of the war-clubs, the dust, the frenzy of the conflict were all overpowering.

It were madness to hope that a man could successfully pass through that fearful avenue of death.

The ranchero was not superhuman. He made a daring fight, but the odds were too great by far.

Sick and faint, exhausted and blind, his efforts grew weaker. Now he stumbled, reeled, sank, and the end had come. Hernando was of the past.

The brutes closed in upon him, blows, fierce and savage, were rained upon him, until his body was battered out of all human semblance.

The gang hovering over him were like vultures over their prey, wolves over a carcass.

Those at the lower end of the line, who had not been given a chance to strike the unfortunate victim now rained blows upon him.

Madge Weston fortunately had been taken into her tepee prison and did not see this horrible tragedy. Frank Reade, Jr., turned his gaze from it with awful horror.

But it was now his turn. He felt the glare of blood-thirsty eyes fixed upon him. He knew that he must be the next victim.

Already several of the savages had started for him. He was led to the same tree at which Hernando had stood.

Big Buffalo stood near with folded arms. Frank was led to the tree and the thongs were made ready to bind him when a startling thing occurred.

Suddenly a couple of excited Indian runners burst into the village. They jabbered their message excitedly to Big Buffalo. A tremendous excitement ensued.

Big Buffalo gave forth several excited orders and rushed to his tepee. Warriors armed themselves, and their ponies were brought out. War paint was daubed onto their faces, and every evidence presented of a preparation for a battle.

Frank was unceremoniously hustled into a tepee and left there. He managed to get a position at a small opening in the tepee, however, from which he could see what was going on.

All was the wildest excitement. It seemed to Frank as if they must have received news of the approach of an enemy. He watched proceedings for a while, and then became aware of a startling fact.

Owing to some inexplicable oversight, they had left the tepee unguarded. Possibly they had intended to bind him, and fancied that this had been done.

However this was, it looked like a good opportunity for escape, and Frank seized it at once.

The tepee in which he was was not three feet from the flap of another. This, Frank believed, held no occupant, for all the squaws, as well as braves, were congregated in the center of the town watching the departure of the war party.

With Frank, to think was to act. He could afford to take desperate chances now. His life depended upon escape.

Without a moment's hesitation he threw himself flat upon his stomach and crawled under the edge of the tepee.

There was the risk that he would be seen by some passing savage.

But he was not discovered.

Under the edge he crawled and across the intervening space to the next tepee. It was his plan to pass through that, and then, with the two tepees between him and the crowd, he fancied he could sneak into some shrubbery near and make good his escape.

He reached the flap of the next tepee and lifted it. He was head and shoulders into the tepee, when he became aware of a startling fact.

The tepee had an occupant.

At first Frank experienced a chill dread that it was one of the savages. But as his eyes became accustomed to the light, he was thrilled with joy as he recognized the petite form and light curls of Madge Weston.

The young girl was sitting upon a pile of skins, with her head bowed in her hands. She seemed in a state of deep dejection.

Frank gave a slight cough. In a moment she was upon her feet.

A scream was upon her lips, but she saw the

uplifted hand and white face of Frank Reade, Jr., in time to check it.

"Madge!" exclaimed Frank, in a loud whisper. "Are you alone? I did not know that you were imprisoned so near me."

"Mr. Reade!" exclaimed the brave young girl in joyous accents. "I am so glad to see you. Yes, I am all alone. My guards have gone, for what reason I do not know. Can we not escape?"

"We must," muttered Frank, rigidly. "You are sure there is no guard on the other side of this tepee?"

"Quite sure," she replied.

"Sh! what is that?"

A footstep sounded outside the tepee. The next moment the flap was lifted and the evil, grinning visage of an Apache looked in.

Frank Reade, Jr., had acted none too quickly. He had thrown himself upon his knees by the tepee's entrance and was almost at the savage's feet as the latter looked in.

Quick as lightning the young inventor reached up and clutched the savage's throat. His grip was sure and firm. The astounded savage would have summoned help with a yell, but he could not.

The next moment a desperate struggle was going on in the tepee. It was a question of physical-supremacy.

Frank never loosened his hold upon the dusky foe's wind-pipe. Weaker and weaker grew the redskin's struggles. Then Frank hurled his unconscious foe from him.

All this while Madge had watched the progress of the struggle with wild yearning. As it was finished she breathed:

"Thank God! my prayer was answered."

There had been a single guard outside the tepee. But he was not there now. The rear of the tepee was near to a clump of bushes.

Taking Madge's hand in his, Frank boldly raised the flap and passed out. Not a savage was in sight.

They reached the cover of the bushes. Through them they quickly sped, and soon were scaling the mountain side.

"Fortune is with us!" cried Frank.

"We are safe," rejoined Madge, in wildest joy. "And, oh, Mr. Reade, tell me of Enid. Is she—"

"Safe on board the Cyclone," was the reply. Madge drew a deep breath.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed. "Indeed, He is kind and merciful."

But at that moment a startling sound came from behind them. The wild yells of discovery and the sounds of pursuit were unmistakably heard.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew that they were by no means safe, and that danger most terrible yet menaced them.

CHAPTER LIII.

A RECONNOITERING TOUR.

THOSE left on board the Cyclone waited in vain for the safe return of Lieut. Lane and Frank Reade, Jr., from the swamp.

Finally the sound of firearms was heard and tremendous excitement was created.

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney, wildly. "It's me-silf as knows that Misther Frank ar' in a bad place, an' I'll be afther goin' out to give him help."

"Jess yo' wait one moment, I'ish, I'se wid yo'!" cried Pomp, as he started after Barney.

Even Dr. Vaneyke was alarmed.

"Do you suppose harm has come to them, Mr. Snyder?" he asked, apprehensively.

"They have certainly run up against a foe,

"Judging from that firing," replied the detective. "I think, however, that Frank knows how to take care of himself."

"Yes, but perhaps we had better send some of the cavalry in to their aid?"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea."

But before Dr. Vaneyke could do this, the two messengers sent by Lane for reinforcements appeared.

This settled the question. The doctor agreed to remain in charge of the Cyclone with Enid, while Pomp, Barney and Snyder joined the relief party.

They made a stubborn resistance, but the cavalry drove them back steadily, and forced them to take to their canoes.

Victory was with the pale-faces, but Frank Reade, Jr., was among the missing. Barney and Pomp were in a frantic state of mind, bordering upon insanity.

"Fo' de good Lor' what hab become ob Marse Frank?" cried Pomp, wildly. "I'se afraid dat he am killed fo' suah."

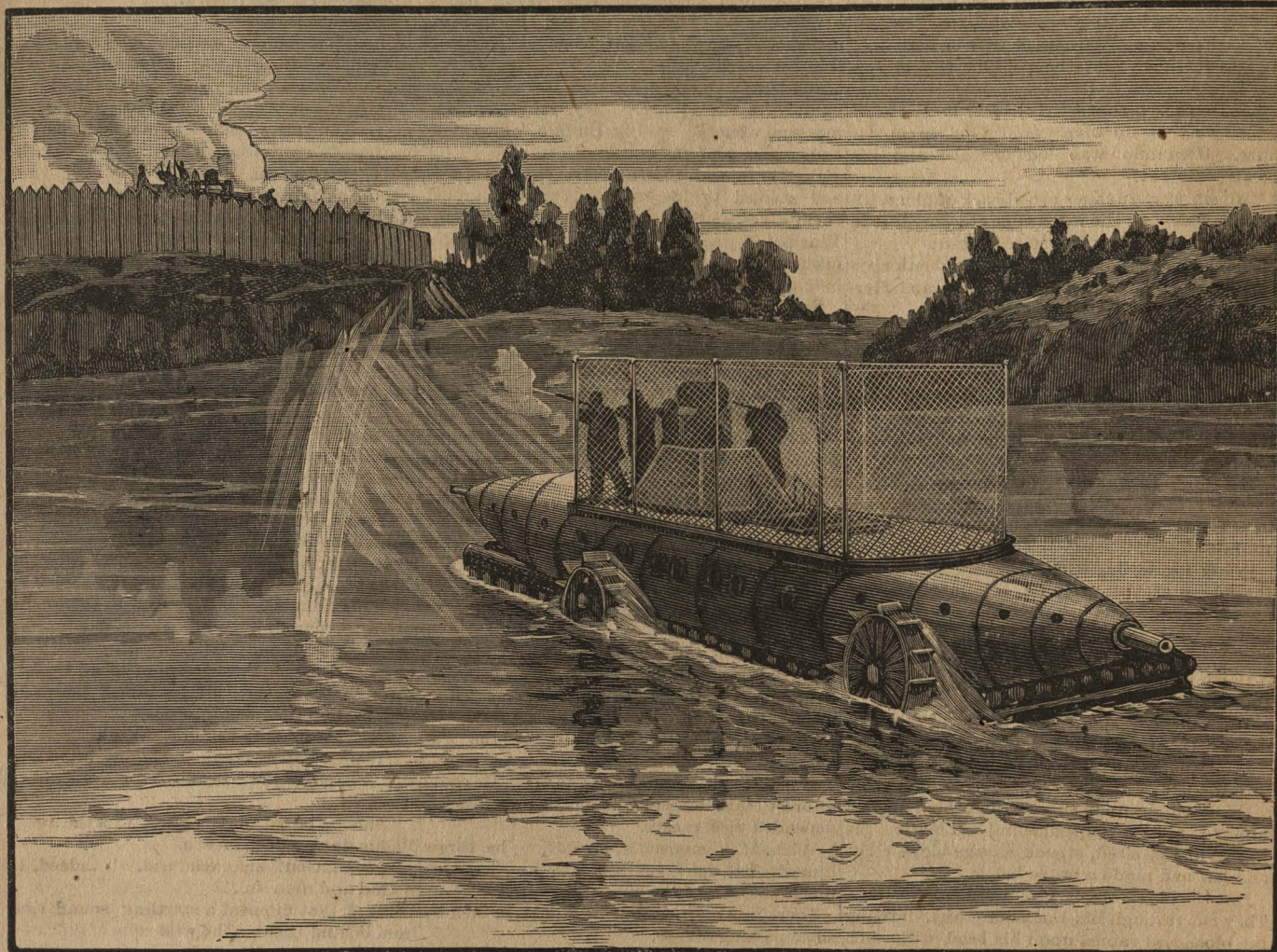
The faithful ducky evinced the deepest distress and his eyes filled with tears of pain and sorrow. Barney was equally distraught.

Lane. "I will go to the head-waters of the river, or that point where it enters the swamp. You, with the Cyclone, may go in the opposite direction. Then we shall be sure to cut off the enemy."

"Correct!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, with approval; "that is certainly the proper move."

"We can then join forces again at the base of the hills," continued the lieutenant. "Is this agreeable to you?"

Barney and Pomp signified their approval with a cheer. Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder were of the same mind. Enid had been an intent



"Begorra, it's thick-headed I am to be sure," cried Barney. "Have at the blasted omadhouns." All fired a volley at the distant gunners and not without effect. Two of them threw up their arms and fell.

Into the swamp they plunged with all haste. The firing was now rapid and quite near at hand.

Lieut. Lane was presently encountered. Barney rushed up to him, crying:

"Where is Misther Reade, at all, at all? Don't yez tell me he's dead, or, bejabbers, I'll spend me loife in avengin' him, bad cess to the blagards of redskins!"

"Mr. Reade!" exclaimed Lieut. Lane; "he is off there to the right, I think. We were set upon very suddenly. We had little time to defend ourselves. I think he is safe."

Barney and Snyder heard this, and dashed away in that direction. But they did not find the object of their quest.

Frank was at that moment a prisoner by the river bank. A desultory bush fight with the savages now followed.

Lieut. Lane caused the most thorough search to be made. Not until the heelprints of Frank's boots were found upon the sandy shore of the river, was any satisfactory conclusion reached.

"Mr. Reade is a prisoner," declared Lieut. Lane, firmly. "Of that I feel sure. If he had been killed we would be very sure to find his body. It is worth something to know that he is alive."

With this plausible assumption the spirits of all arose. Barney and Pomp went back to the Cyclone and a conference was held.

It was decided to start at once in pursuit of the savages and if possible to rescue Frank Reade, Jr.

It was safe to assume that they had gone down the river in canoes and would come out at the same point that the Cyclone had.

"I will tell you what to do," declared Lieut.

listener to the conference, and now clasping her hands, murmured:

"Oh! I pray Heaven that Mr. Reade may be rescued."

"Shure we'll do it, darlint, or die in the attempt," declared Barney, firmly. "Niver fear but we will."

Now that the plan was decided upon, no time was lost in making the start.

Those on board the Cyclone waved a farewell to Lieut. Lane and his men, who galloped away to the southward.

Then the Cyclone was put under speed and went bowling away to the upper end of the swamp region. In a few hours the spot was reached where the Cyclone had emerged from her former trip through the swamp.

The savages had, however, preceded them. Their trail was distinctly visible where they

had left the river and started for the hills with their ponies.

"Niver moind!" cried Barney, as Dr. Vaneyke looked disappointed, "we ken moighty soon run the blaggards down. Begorra, the trail is fresh an' aisy follered."

But darkness was coming on rapidly now. This hindered following the trail as rapidly as might have been done in daylight.

The search-light of course was employed, yet the tracing of the footprints was difficult in the extreme. It was near morning when the Cyclone finally reached the hills.

us must go at a time on any reconnoitering tour."

"Shure there's only the two of us," put in Barney, eagerly.

"Ah, yes, but that is not fair. What about Mr. Snyder and myself?"

"Shure yez kin go out afther we come back," argued Barney.

"No, a better way I think, is to draw lots. We can then settle the affair amicably."

At first Barney demurred. But finally it was decided to draw lots to see who should go upon the reconnoitering tour.

of the air. In an instant Barney and Snyder threw back the hammers of their rifles.

"Pwhat the divil was that?" cried the Celt, in amazement. The answer was a harsh, mocking laugh.

Then, from behind bowlders and trees, about fully a score of men stepped forth, and gleaming rifle barrels covered the two reconnoiterers. They were the outlaws; and, grinning with triumph, Carlos Coleman himself was visible in the background.

It was a trap of death into which they had unconsciously stepped, and Snyder's and Bar-



The Cyclone came to a halt not twenty yards from the rider. Then it was seen that he was pale and ghastly and covered with blood. His sword arm hung limply by his side and there were shot holes in his broad brimmed hat. He gazed in blank amazement at the Cyclone. Frank Reade, Jr., stepped out onto the gang ladder.

And here, in the hard, flinty soil, the trail was lost.

"Well," exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke, after a few hours of puzzling quest, "there is just one thing about it. The savages are somewhere in these hills. The search may be a random one, but we cannot afford to waste time here."

"Roight yez are!" cried Barney. "Bejabers, I say let us go ahead an' thrust to luck to foind the spalpeens. Come on, naygur, we'll moighty quick foind the red divils."

"Dat hit dis nigger jes right, yo' kin bet," cried Pomp, readily. "Yo' jes go ahead, I'ish, an' I'll foller yo' anywhars."

"No—no!" interposed Dr. Vaneyke. "That won't do."

"An' phwy not, sar?" asked Barney.

"We are in a dangerous locality. We must not leave the Cyclone in a body. Only two of

The lucky numbers were drawn by Barney and Snyder. This left Pomp and Dr. Vaneyke to defend the Cyclone. Pomp felt a trifle disappointed, but accepted his fate with very good grace.

Barney and Snyder, well armed, left the Cyclone a few moments later. They plunged into the fastnesses of the hills, and were quickly swallowed up from sight.

For hours they tramped on, clambering over bowlders, skirting high cliffs, treading deep gorges and searching in vain for some trace of the savages.

Not even a footmark could be found. It was long after the noon hour when they came into a little dell, in the midst of mountain firs, and a thrilling incident transpired.

A shrill treble whistle broke the stillness

ney's sensations were not of the most comfortable just then.

CHAPTER LIV.

A WONDERFUL LEAP.

THE sounds of pursuit in their rear warned Frank Reade, Jr., that they were by no means as yet out of danger, and he fairly carried Madge up the mountain side in their flight from the Apache village.

The start obtained was but a slight advantage, yet Frank managed to give the pursuers the slip for a time, and paused to rest finally in a sheltered nook in the mountain wall.

He was quite exhausted, as was Madge. But both recovered themselves and were overjoyed in the consciousness that they had escaped.

"Fortune has favored us," declared Frank, as he seated himself upon a shelf of rock. "I

never expected to escape from that den of death."

Madge covered her face with her hands and shuddered:

"Oh, I am indeed thankful that at last I am out of the power of enemies," she cried, earnestly. "And I owe it all to you, Mr. Reade."

"Not a bit of it," protested Frank, modestly. "It was all rare good luck."

"Do not say that. But for your daring feat of strangling that Indian sentry, we would yet be captives."

"Fortune favored us," said Frank, evading the compliment. "Now, if it does not desert us, we shall succeed in reaching the Cyclone. Once both of us are aboard the Cyclone, your troubles are at an end."

Madge clasped her hands joyfully at the prospect which was so joyous.

"Oh, I pray Heaven the moment is not far distant!" she said, fervently.

Frank arose to his feet. He was now in a measure recovered, and he knew well the danger of tarrying long in the vicinity.

There was no sound of pursuit from below now. The locality seemed deserted.

But Frank was a little befogged as to where he was. He was wholly at a loss to know what direction to take in his quest for the Cyclone.

An idea occurred to him.

"Madge, I will have to ask you to wait here a few moments for my return," he declared. "I am going to climb up that peak there to get a better view. I will return soon."

"All right, Mr. Reade," agreed Madge, readily. "I will not stir from this spot until you come back."

Frank disappeared, and Madge, left alone, shrank further into the cleft in the cliff. The moments passed slowly, and it seemed as if hours had passed, when a startling incident occurred.

Suddenly Madge heard a guttural exclamation, and a clump of bushes to her right was parted. It revealed a copper hued face, with a demoniac expression upon it. The small, snake-like eyes of a savage were fixed upon her.

For an instant Madge was powerless to move or act, so great was the spell of horror upon her.

Then she sprang up like a tigress at bay, and a thrilling scream pealed from her lips.

The Apache, for such he was, at once leaped out of his concealment, with tomahawk uplifted. The light upon his face was devilish, as he hissed:

"White girl no make noise. Injun kill quick."

Madge ignored the threat and screamed wildly. Up the hillside sprang a half score of the painted demons. She was once again hopelessly a prisoner.

Frank Reade, Jr., had heard her call of alarm and had started to her relief. But from his position on the peak he saw that she was a prisoner and though he had no lack of courage to attack the savage gang he paused.

If he attacked them, there was not the slightest chance of effecting Madge's rescue. He would only be recaptured himself.

Therefore he adopted the most sensible move and decided to refrain from such foolhardiness.

"My liberty is worth more to her as well as to myself!" he muttered. "They will not be likely to do her harm at once and the chance is good for her rescue."

He had no sooner made this resolution than he was confronted with a deadly peril. In some way the savages had located his position and now they swarmed up the cliff after him.

Frank Reade, Jr., acted none too soon. He started down the opposite side of the peak and as he reached level ground his pursuers burst upon him.

They were so near that one of them grasped his coat sleeve. If Frank had not acted quickly he would have been made a prisoner at that moment.

But quick as a flash he let his right arm out, and his fist came in contact with the savage's jaw. The aborigine dropped as if struck by a thunderbolt.

Away Frank ran like an arrow. He was a good sprinter, and speedily secured a good lead.

But the Apache Indian is no mean athlete, so the whole gang hung on his heels. For over a mile this state of affairs continued.

Frank had good powers of endurance, but he knew that it was necessary for his own safety that the race should find a speedy end.

But how to accomplish this was a conundrum. He looked in vain for an avenue into the forest, where he could blind his pursuers. No chance presented itself, until suddenly he came to a wide chasm, through which dashed a mountain stream.

The walls were sheer in their descent for over one hundred feet. On the edge of this Frank came to a halt.

The young inventor measured the distance across with his eye. He was a famous jumper, in fact, he had never found his match at long jumping. At once a daring resolve entered his mind.

Frank did not believe that there was a savage in the Apache nation who could leap that gorge. It was really a longer leap than he had ever taken, but it seemed to him at that moment the only chance for life.

He was not long in making up his mind. Going back fifty feet to get a good start, Frank began his run. Like an arrow he bounded forward, his feet left the verge and he was in mid air.

For one brief instant he was in space. The slightest miscalculation, the least faltering movement meant death. It was a tremendous space to cross.

The savages had come in sight and they were just in time to see the leap.

Frank's feet struck the opposite verge. He stumbled, slipped and hung half over the edge.

There had not been an inch to spare. The next moment he scrambled safely over the verge to terra firma. Behind the shelter of some rocks and he was safe.

It was a marvelous leap. Frank had some curiosity to know whether the savages would attempt the feat or not.

So he paused in a secure position and watched them.

They advanced to the verge of the chasm and halted. Then a quick excited conference was held. Finally one of them threw off his head-dress and essayed the leap.

Going back to get momentum the Apache started for the chasm. Evidently he fancied that he could make the leap safely if the white man had done so. His error was speedily made manifest.

Out into space he launched himself. Then a despairing death shriek pealed from his lips, for he missed the opposite side by several feet, and went down to his death at the bottom of the gorge.

Frank Reade, Jr., waited to see no more. He knew that he had erected a barrier which his pursuers could not cross, so he went on more leisurely.

For some while he went on, looking for a way out of the hills, when he suddenly came

to a small glade. He heard the sound of voices, and gaining a point of observation was electrified to see two men surrounded by a dozen.

More than this, he easily recognized Carlos Coleman and his gang, while the two men in the center of the group were no others than Barney and Snyder.

CHAPTER LV.

THE OUTLAW'S DEFEAT.

It was a strange working of fate which had brought Frank Reade, Jr., to the spot just as Barney and Snyder were entrapped by Coleman and his gang.

He stood for a moment a startled witness of the scene. He saw their deadly peril, and knew that unless something was immediately done to rescue them, they would meet a fearful fate.

He knew that they were in the hills looking for him. He also knew that the Cyclone could not be far away.

Barney, with his customary Irish wit, was parleying with the villain. Snyder, however, was determined not to be taken alive.

So, as the murderous gang closed in on them, he opened fire with his pistol. It was with deadly effect also.

"If I must die, it may as well be with my boots on!" he cried, heroically. "Come on, you dastardly crew."

His revolver cracked again and again and several outlaws fell. Coleman was furious and cried:

"Close in, men, take 'em alive at any cost! Don't kill 'em!"

Both Barney and Snyder knew that that meant a fate far worse than death.

"Be me sowl!" cried Barney, excitedly, "it's mesilf as will niver be taken aloive by the loikes av them blaggards. Whurroo! jist fall back as ye foight, Misther Snyder. Onct we reach that big rock, bejabbers, we'll make a break for it."

Snyder saw the point and was not slow to take advantage of it. The next moment the rock was reached. Outlaws were behind them, but they broke the line with a couple of shots.

Infuriated, Coleman, fearful that they might indeed escape, cried:

"Close in, men! Don't let 'em escape. Take 'em dead or alive!"

At this command the outlaws began to use their revolvers. Both plucky men would have been riddled with bullets but for quick action.

Quick as a flash Barney sprang behind the rock. Snyder followed him. Then using it as a shield they dashed into a small pass among the rocks.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw that move. He could contain himself no longer, but sprang down the rocks to meet the fugitives. He let out a yell which caused both to turn their heads.

At sight of him alive and well Barney was almost beside himself with joy.

"Whurroo!" he yelled, dancing wildly and waving his arms like a maniac. "It's Misther Frank himsilf an' may the Howly Vargin kape us. We're all roight onct more."

He rushed up to Frank and in characteristic exuberance embraced him. Fortunately a great pile of bowlders protected them from the bullets of the foe.

"Och hone, an' yez don't know how glad I am that yez are aloive onct more, Misther Frank. We all thought yez war kilt intoirely."

"I am as good as two dead men," laughed Frank.

"Mr. Reade, you don't know how glad we are to know that you are safe!" cried Snyder.

"It does not look as if any of us were safe

now," replied Frank. "Coleman has us cornered. Have you got a spare pistol, Mr. Snyder?"

"Certainly," replied the detective, handing the weapon to Frank.

"Good! I can help to keep the foe at bay. But where is the Cyclone?"

"Not far from here," replied Snyder. "But we could not bring her over on account of the rough ground."

"An' phwere have yez been all this toime, Misher Frank?" cried Barney.

"I have not time to tell you all now," replied Frank. "After we get out of this scrimmage we will have a talk."

This ended the conversation and all gave their attention to the foe in front. Rapid shots were exchanged and Frank Reade, Jr., and his companions endeavored to fall back under cover of the various piles of boulders.

In this they were quite successful. Coleman, infuriated, and fearful that his prey would escape him, urged his men on with savage oaths.

Coolly and steadily the three fell back, keeping up a telling fire upon the outlaws. Over the rocky ridge they retreated, and suddenly coming around an angle in the mountain wall, they saw the Cyclone far below.

"Hooray!" shouted Barney, wildly. "How-iver did the Cyclone show up in that place? Bejabs, I can see the naygur himself be the pilot-house."

Sure enough, Pomp was visible on the Cyclone's deck. He had seen the three fugitives and was making signals to them. Having heard the firing and knowing thereby that their friends were in trouble, Dr. Vaneyke and Pomp had managed to work their way further into the hills with the Cyclone.

It proved an opportune thing, for now Pomp signaled his friends and then threw a bolt from the electric gun up among the rocks to drive back the foe.

The shot made terrible execution. Immense boulders were split into fragments, the air was filled with flying stones and the outlaws fled in dismay.

Frank and Barney and Snyder indulged in a wild cheer of triumph, which was returned by those on the Cyclone.

"Bad cess to the varmint!" cried Barney, excitedly, "they niver kin defeat the Cyclone. Bejabs it's a foine bating we gave them."

A few moments later they were again on board the Cyclone. The reunion was a happy one, but Frank Reade, Jr., caught sight of Enid's pale, expectant face and went up to her.

"Your sister Madge shall be saved yet," he declared. "I had hoped to bring her back to the Cyclone this time, but I shall succeed next time. Keep up good courage."

"Thank you for those words of cheer," cried the young girl, earnestly. "Oh, I can never be happy again until Madge is rescued. I pray all the time for her."

Frank Reade, Jr., averted his face to hide his emotion.

"Cling to hope, Enid," he said, kindly. "Do not give up. All will come out right yet."

He turned away, and Dr. Vaneyke addressed him.

"Well, Frank, what are your orders?" asked the scientist. "Shall we remain here longer?"

"No," replied Frank, quickly. "Madge no doubt has been taken back to the Indian village. I think there is a pass to the eastward, by which we can make our way almost into the Apache camp with the Cyclone. We will make our way out to the plains first, and then hunt up that pass."

Orders were quickly given to Barney and

Pomp and the Cyclone was speedily put in motion.

Nothing more was seen of Coleman and his gang, though doubtless they were ensconced behind some craggy height watching the movements of the Cyclone at the moment.

Slowly winding its way through tortuous defiles the Cyclone gradually crept out of the hills. Soon it was speeding over the plain and skirting the base of the hills to the eastward.

In due course of time Frank Reade, Jr., located the pass which he believed would lead to the Indian village. It was a broad canyon with a level floor, over which the Cyclone easily passed.

But after a time the canyon merged into a valley and then the Cyclone was obliged to find its way along the base of a wooded height.

While creeping slowly along in this way, a thrilling incident happened.

Barney had been sweeping the Cyclone's deck and opened the steel door in the screen to throw the refuse out. The door remained open, nobody having a thought of danger.

The first warning was a wild, piercing scream from Enid's lips, followed by a snarling cry.

From a limb of a mountain pine, a huge panther had sprung through the open door and landed fairly in the center of the deck.

Enid at the moment was not ten feet distant and the glaring eyes of the savage beast were fixed upon her.

CHAPTER LVI.

MADGE PROVES HER COURAGE.

WORDS cannot depict the despair and terror of Madge Weston as she realized that she was again in the power of the Apaches.

Her screams did not bring Frank Reade, Jr., to her rescue. The fact was the famous inventor, as the reader knows, was unable to aid her.

In spite of her struggles she was lifted bodily and carried down the mountain side. In a short time she was once again in the Indian village.

Big Buffalo, the chief, came up to her with a leering, triumphant expression upon his painted visage.

"Wagh! White girl no get away," he grunted. "She belong to Injun. White man he soon be caught by Injun trailer. His scalp hang in Big Buffalo's tepee soon."

Of course Madge could make no appeal to the savage brute. This she well knew would be useless. She could only remain quiet and inwardly pray for rescue.

There was great excitement in the Indian town. Bands of trailers were coming and going, and Madge knew that they were in quest of Frank Reade, Jr. But she felt much encouraged as the hours passed away and no news of his capture came.

"He has eluded them," she murmured, with a thrill. "I pray Heaven that he may be able to reach his friends and return with them to my rescue."

She was again confined in a tepee, with two Indian guards outside. Here she waited in suspense for some time. After awhile, however, the flap of the tepee was drawn back and Big Buffalo entered.

He regarded her with an evil leer, and striking an attitude, said:

"Pale face girl will soon become the squaw of Big Buffalo. Him big chief. Pale face girl dwell in his tepee. Injun wife wait on white wife. Ugh! White girl come."

He held up the flap of the tepee and motioned Madge to walk out. Only too glad to get into the open air, Madge did so.

She was surprised to see that all of the tepees had been struck and were fastened on the backs of ponies. The general appearance was that of moving.

And such was a fact. Big Buffalo, for some discreet reason, had decided to change his headquarters. Perhaps he feared that the white man's wonderful "thunder wagon," as the savages designated the Cyclone, would descend upon and destroy him and his village.

The whole encampment was on the move. The tepees and equipage of the camp were left in charge of the women and a part of the band, while Big Buffalo, with the others, mounted their ponies and rode ahead.

The chief caused Madge to be tied to a pony's back, and she rode in their midst. In this way they struck into a pass which led out of the hills, and were soon upon the prairie.

For some hours Big Buffalo's band galloped on. It was high noon when they finally drew rein.

In the edge of a clump of timber the Apache chief halted his men and proceeded to camp. A fire was made, one of the Indian hunters brought in a fine buck, and its juicy meat was soon cooking over the coals.

Madge was released from her bonds and allowed the freedom of the camp. The savage captors did not fear that she could escape, and little watch was kept upon her movements.

Except by Big Buffalo. The Apache chief had seemed to become enamored of the white maiden, and presently this led him to rise and approach her.

"Wagh! White girl very pretty," he said, in an uncouth attempt at a compliment. "Me like white girl. Me kiss white girl. She be my squaw. Ugh!"

He essayed to throw an arm about Madge's waist. The young girl recoiled with an attitude of scorn, and cried:

"Hands off! Don't you dare touch me, you reptile."

This made the chief ugly.

"Ugh! White girl no do dat," he grunted. "Heap foolish. She prisoner. Do dat, Big Buffalo kill quick."

The brute handled his pistol butt suggestively. But this did not terrify Madge. She was desperate and knew that her life depended on some quick action.

In fact a daring plan had suddenly found formation in her mind. They were apart from the rest of the gang and near where the ponies were tethered.

Madge Weston was no ordinary girl, as the reader has seen. She was of the heroine type, and brave as a lion. No sooner had the plan suggested itself to her than she hastened to put it into execution.

The chief once again drew near her. The brute fancied that his threat had made her subservient. He again made an effort to put an arm about her waist.

"White girl heap sense," he grunted with delight. "She know Big Buffalo big chief. She be his squaw."

But Madge's keen gaze was upon the tomahawk thrust into the chief's belt. She was a strong girl, with a daring spirit. Quick as thought she acted.

She made a quick move forward, and wrenched the tomahawk from its place. Before the astounded chief could comprehend what she was about, she swung it aloft and brought it down with a sweep like lightning upon his head.

The chief went down like an ox in the shambles. All had transpired in a flash of time. Several braves started up with a yell. But

already Madge was among the tethered ponies.

She pulled up the tethering stake of the nearest. A born horsewoman, it was an easy matter for her to vault upon the animal's back.

Like an arrow the pony sped out on the plain. But the Indian braves were mounting in pursuit.

It was possible that they might have overtaken her. But just at that moment from beyond the timber line there swept into view a squad of U. S. cavalymen.

The tall, handsome young officer in advance, with an eagle eye took in the situation. The young white girl fleeing before the horde of Indian braves told its own story.

It required him but an instant to act. Down into his saddle he sat. Up whirled his gleaming saber, and he cried:

"Draw saber! Charge!"

Down swept the body of United States cavalymen like an avalanche. They were not seen by the Indians until almost upon them. Then what a scattering there was.

With yells of dismay the savages broke and fled. Hearing the tumult Madge turned her head.

She saw the gleaming uniforms and knew she was saved. She reined in the little Indian pony, and the next moment Lieut. Lane, tall, handsome and gallant was bowing low before her.

"Miss Weston, I believe," he cried, in a rich full voice. "This is an honor."

"That is my name," replied Madge. "But how did you know that?"

"That is easily told," replied the lieutenant. "I have heard the whole story from Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., with whom I have been co-operating in an attempt to effect your rescue. The honor has fallen upon me."

Madge blushed beneath his warm gaze. She thought she had never seen a nobler specimen of manhood in her life, and on the other hand Lane thought he had never seen so beautiful a young girl.

It was mutual attraction, and afterwards they were pleased to look back upon that first meeting with a thrill of pleasure. As soon as she could get command of herself, Madge said:

"I owe you my life, Lieut. Lane. Your coming was quite opportune. I shall hope to repay you some day. But—can you kindly tell me how I am to rejoin my friends on the Cyclone?"

"Certainly!" replied Lane, with a gallant bow. "You shall go with me now to our post which is near here. There I will leave you, and as soon as I can hunt up the Cyclone, I will bring your friends to you. In the meanwhile you can make yourself comfortable."

Madge experienced a delicious thrill of pleasure. It seemed as if all her troubles had come to an end and the paths of happiness and content were before her.

CHAPTER LVII.

POMP'S BRAVE DEED.

It was a thrilling moment for little Enid Weston as the panther alighted upon the Cyclone's deck and fixed its glaring orbs upon her.

The savage beast, lashing its tail furiously, was not ten feet from her. Enid, overcome with horror and the awful fascination of terror, could not move.

Frank Reade, Jr., was just coming out of the cabin. He saw the child's peril, but had no weapon in his possession, so was powerless to help her.

Dr. Vaneyke and Snyder were by the pilot-

house, Barney was in the dynamo room and Pomp was the only person near Enid.

The faithful ducky had been engaged in shining up some bright work at the lower end of the deck. He saw the panther leap and a sharp cry escaped him.

"Fo' de good Lor', I done leabe dat do' open fo' dat critter to come in!" he cried. "An' now he jess goin' fo' to chew up dat lilly gal. No, no, no! I'll neber see him do dat, fo' I'll die m'self first."

The brave ducky meant every word he said. He knew that there was but the briefest of time for him to act.

He knew that he alone could save Enid. Already the panther was preparing to spring.

Pomp had no weapon but his bowie knife. This he happened to have in his belt. It was not a very efficient weapon with which to meet a panther, but he gripped it tightly in his hand.

Quick as a flash he let out a terrific yell and sprung straight for the monster. The move had its effect.

The panther's attention was instantly diverted. He wheeled and made a savage spring at Pomp. The negro lowered his head and struck the panther full force.

The shock would have brained a white man. But Pomp's head was as hard as lignum vitae, and the panther was fairly hurled back against the wire netting.

"Ki, yi!" yelled the plucky Ethiopian, as he rushed in upon his adversary with the knife.

"Yo' jes' tink yo' gwine to eat the lilly gal, eh? Not much, fo' dis nigger kin spoil yo' little game!"

Frank Reade, Jr., and Dr. Vaneyke had seen Pomp's brave act and were electrified.

At first they had been unable to act, but now Frank sprang to the cabin, crying:

"Get your rifles! Turn out, everybody, quick, to save Pomp's life."

Snyder was the first to reach the deck with his rifle. Pomp had slashed the panther's body with his knife, but the animal was closing in upon him, when the detective rushed forward and gave the brute a shot at point blank range.

The bullet went crashing through the panther's brain, and the savage animal fell to the deck, dead. It was just in time.

Beyond a few scratches, Pomp was all right. He had saved the life of little Enid, and was a hero in the eyes of all.

"Pomp, you have covered yourself with glory!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., warmly, as he gripped the faithful fellow's hand.

The others joined in this praise. Pomp was quite overcome. He scratched his woolly head, perplexedly, and cried:

"I don' jes' know 'bout dat. I leabe dat do' open m'sef, I'spec, or de panther would neber hab come in at all."

"That don't make any difference," cried Frank. "You proved yourself a brave man. You are a real hero, Pomp."

With this the young inventor devoted himself to quieting Enid's nerves which were quite upset by the incident. She was very grateful to Pomp, however, and eagerly made this manifest in an earnest manner.

The ducky was quite flustered with the honor showered upon him, and Barney with his astuteness was quick to notice this.

The Celt's eyes twinkled roguishly. Secretly he admired Pomp's valor, but it was too good an opportunity to rattle his friend, and he was determined not to lose it.

He watched his opportunity and when he was sure that Frank was in the cabin and Pomp was at the wheel, Barney crept up to the door of the pilot-house and quickly fastened a

small wire across the door about a foot from the threshold.

This he extended down into the engine-room and connected with one of the dynamos. Chuckling to himself, he went back upon deck.

There was a large, round tub in the hold half filled with dirty water. Barney brought this up and sat it down just in front of the door.

Then he pretended to busy himself about the deck with a scrubbing brush. Pomp looking around once saw the tub and concluded that Barney was doing some washing, but he did not see the wire.

Barney waited for a favorable moment, then he hustled into the pilot-house, carefully stepping over the wire, and cried:

"Begorra, if yez will go roight down now, quick, an' see Misther Frank, I'll howld the wheel for yez until yez get back. Don't wait for him to call yez agin."

"Marse Frank want to see me?" gasped the surprised ducky. "A' right, I'sh, yo' kin hol' de wheel. I'se come right back."

Barney had hard work to keep his mug straight, but the instant Pomp's back was turned he set a straight course and stayed the wheel with an appliance for that purpose.

He had no sooner done this than Pomp walked into the trap like a lamb to the slaughter.

The ducky's ankles struck the wire. He received a terrific shock, which threw him forward, and—splash! right into the tub of dirty water.

Barney burst into a roar of laughter and dashed out of the pilot-house. The scene was comical in the extreme.

Pomp emerged from the tub, spluttering and gasping and mad as a hornet. He comprehended the trick at once, and was both discomfited and enraged. He fairly shrieked in his wrath as he emerged from the tub.

"Darn yo' ole hide! Yo' I'sh mucker!" he yelled, making a rush for Barney. "I'll jes' show yo' dat yo' can't fool dis nigger dat way an' lib to tell ob it. I'll jes' hab yo' sktn fo' dis!"

"Come on, ye misfit gorilla!" roared Barney, dashing into the dynamo room. "How did yez loike the dirty wather? An' phwat do yez think av that for squarin' accounts?"

"I'll jes' break yo' back if I get hol' ob yo'!" screamed Pomp, rushing down the iron stairs.

But Barney shut the door to the dynamo room, and Pomp saw him just in the act of charging the iron stairs with electricity. The ducky retreated to the deck.

"Erin go bragh!" cried Barney, in jubilation. "Qireland's ahead av Afriky this toime. Go an' put yure head in soak, naygur. Yez are no good phwatever. Whurroo!"

Pomp fumed and stormed as he wrung the dirty water out of his clothes and shook it from his wool. But he was powerless to get square with Barney just yet, and was obliged to go back to the wheel, for the Cyclone was coming to rough ground again.

Barney did not venture to emerge from his retreat for some time. The result was a comical incident.

He heard some sort of an excitement on deck, and thought he'd take a peep up and see what it was. Irishman like, he forgot that he had charged the steel stairs with electricity.

The instant he put his foot upon them, he was given a somersault in the air. Scrambling to his feet in chagrin, he hastened to shut off the current.

"Begorra, I have the family record ov the O'Sheas for tin centuries, an' I niver heerd tell av one fool among thim," he muttered, in dis-

gust. "But be the powers, I believe the record is broken."

There was considerable excitement on deck. Frank Reade, Jr., Dr. Vaneyke, and Duncan Snyder were all forward. The Cyclone had reached the Indian encampment.

But to the surprise of all, not a tepee was standing. The Indians had folded their tents and stolen away like the Bedouins of the American wilds that they were.

They had left little behind but the ashes of their camp fires. Of course they had taken Madge with them. Frank Reade, Jr., was both chagrined and disappointed.

CHAPTER LVIII.

TRAILING THE RED FOE.

THE Apache camp was quite deserted. Frank Reade, Jr., had hoped to find Big Buffalo's band there, for he believed that he could have brought them to terms.

But the savages were gone. For a time the young inventor was in a literal quandary as to what it was best to do.

"Beggara, the red haythens had a bit av good sinse, I do declare!" cried Barney. "They jist knew enough to give the Cyclone a wide berth."

"You are right, Barney!" cried Duncan Snyder.

"Well, Barney," said Frank Reade, Jr., sharply, "you seem to display good judgment on this Indian question. Perhaps you can tell us what it is best to do now?"

"Shure, sorr," replied Barney, scratching his head in a bewildered way, "yez do me too much honor; but av it was mesilf alone, I'd jist foind out the trail av the spalpeens, an' I'd chase thim all over this cuntry."

"Capital!" cried Frank. "You have hit it right, Barney. I will act upon your idea."

This elevated Barney, and gave him an immense idea of his importance. That Frank Reade, Jr., should ask his advice and then act upon it was a tribute to his sagacity which quite upset his equilibrium.

He turned up his nose at Pomp, and that worthy felt quite humble indeed. It was an amusing scene and thoroughly enjoyed by the others.

But this was not business, and there was much of an important nature to attend to. No further time was wasted.

Pomp was the best trailer, and he was deputized to locate the trail. Anybody could have done this, however, for it was quite plain to see and follow.

In a few moments it was decided that the Indians had left the hills, and that there was a good chance of their being overtaken by the Cyclone on the open plain.

This would mean victory and the rescue of Madge. At once the Cyclone was run back to the prairie.

It was not difficult to find the trail of the savages. It extended to the southward, and was followed by the Cyclone for some hours. Then a puzzling thing occurred.

The trail suddenly split into two trails, one bearing off directly westward. Here was a quandary. Which trail ought to be taken?

It was a puzzler. The party had split here beyond all doubt. The real fact was that the split had occurred in the hills, but the second party had followed the trail of the first party thus far only to deviate from it right here.

Which trail should be followed?

Frank Reade, Jr., tried to figure it out in his head.

"We must follow that party in which Madge is," he declared, "but what trail is theirs?"

There was absolutely no choice. At length, Frank concluded to follow the trail to the westward. He would overtake that party, and, if Madge was not with them, then he would overtake the other party.

Accordingly, the Cyclone was put under highest pressure and went flying away across the level prairie.

At a forty-mile gait the Cyclone ran down the party of savages. Dr. Vaneyke was keeping watch forward with a powerful glass.

Suddenly he caught sight of an object upon the distant horizon. It was a black speck, yet he felt sure that it was the object of their pursuit.

He called the attention of Frank Reade, Jr., to the object. As a result the young inventor went to the stairway and shouted:

"Let the dynamos out, Barney. Put on the strongest current. We want all the speed possible!"

Now on a level, hard floor, like the smooth prairie they were running over, the Cyclone was a good match for a locomotive. It could be made to run at the rate of sixty miles an hour. As a result every minute brought the distant party nearer to view.

It could be seen that they were a large party of the Apaches. Many were on foot leading ponies, with the poles of the tepees fastened to a girth and dragging upon the ground behind. This is the Indian method of transportation.

Nearer and nearer the Cyclone drew to the party of savages. Then it could be seen that they had halted in affright.

The Cyclone sweeping down upon them terrified them. Instantly the ponies were drawn up in a circle, the squaws and small party of braves seeking refuge behind them.

As soon as Frank Reade, Jr., saw the nature of the Indian party his hopes fell. He did not believe that Madge was with them.

However, the Cyclone was forced into their very midst and brought to a stop. Nothing could be seen of Madge. There were scores of Indian squaws and a handful of bucks. They were able to make no resistance against the Cyclone.

Frank went to a loophole in the netting, and shouted:

"Who can talk with the pale face? Let him come out."

The crowd parted, and a tall young brave stepped forth.

"I am Eagle Feather," he said, haughtily, folding his arms. "I can talk with pale face."

"Very good, Eagle Feather," said Frank, quietly. "Where is your chief, Big Buffalo?"

"He is on the great hunt," replied the young brave, stolidly.

"Ah, where is the white girl, whom Big Buffalo will make his squaw?"

The brave's eyes glistened. He shook his head sullenly.

"Look here, Eagle Feather," cried Frank, sternly. "I want no fooling whatever. If you don't tell me the truth, the thunder wagon will kill you all."

Not a muscle of the Apache brave's face quivered. He simply said:

"White girl go way with Big Buffalo. She not here."

Frank drew a deep breath. He saw that the Apache spokesman told the truth. It would be wasting time to stay here longer.

Dr. Vaneyke had been listening intently. Now he exclaimed:

"Well, Frank, what do you think? Is the girl with this band?"

"No," replied the young inventor, positively.

"I don't think she is. I believe she is with the other gang. We made a mistake in taking this trail."

"It looks so," said Dr. Vaneyke, disappointedly; "then we had better not waste time here, Frank."

"You are right," agreed the young inventor; "we will go back at once."

"Eagle Feather," he said sternly to the Apache. "You and your people have had a narrow escape. I could have blown you all into eternity. But go! You are safe."

The young Apache warrior only smiled contemptuously. Then he turned with dignity and rejoined the others of the party, who were all watching the Cyclone with curiosity if not fear.

On the back trail the Cyclone thundered away at a terrific rate of speed. Mile after mile was spun over until the junction of the two trails was reached.

Here the trail to the southward was taken. For miles the Cyclone kept its course. Then Dr. Vaneyke, who was in the pilot-house with a glass, suddenly cried:

"I can see a line of timber. The trail leads toward it, and possibly the savages are encamped there."

"Let us hope that such is the case," declared Duncan Snyder.

In due course of time, the Cyclone reached the timber, and here a great surprise was in store. The trail became mixed and broken and the ground was trampled as if with the footprints of a fighting party.

A little ways nearer the edge of the timber a human body was seen lying on the ground. Barney opened the steel door in the netting and went out to examine it.

It was the body of a white man in the uniform of a Union soldier. He had been scalped and otherwise mutilated. Several mounds of fresh earth near showed that the other victims of the struggle were buried there.

It was easy to guess that a conflict between the Indians and government troops had taken place here. Two trails led from the spot—one continuing to the north and the other going east.

CHAPTER LIX.

COLEMAN ONCE MORE ON TOP.

BUT Madge Weston, rescued from the Apaches by Lieut. Lane, was by no means arrived at the end of her thrilling experience. The future yet held dark hours for her.

But this was a respite most grateful to her. At least she was for the time being safe.

Lieut. Lane was very polite and gallant. She rode by his side at the head of the command all the way to the military post. It was an opportunity which neither neglected for a very pleasant acquaintance.

In due course of time the gleam of water was seen in the distance, and the lieutenant, waving his gloved hand to the eastward, said:

"Now you can see the outlines of our ranch. It is a rough building on the banks of the river. The quarters are not very elegantly furnished, but I shall soon hope to bring your friends and the Cyclone to you."

"You are very kind," Madge replied with a vivid blush. "I shall not forget it."

The lieutenant felt a thousand times repaid in that avowal, and his heart leaped. He was strangely impressed by this beautiful young girl, whose life was in his charge.

A bugle call was heard in the distance, which was evidence that they were seen by those at the ranch.

A few moments later the military post, if

such it could be called, was in plain view. It was really a temporary camp, Lieut. Lane's men, being a detachment from a government fort, several hundred miles to the south.

A deserted ranch had been converted into a habitation by the soldiers. Here the officers found quarters, and in case of emergency it could be used as a passable shelter from the arrows of an attacking foe.

A hundred white tents dotted the river bluff. A small detachment had been left on guard, and these were drawn up in a line and presented arms as Lieut. Lane and his men rode in.

A short, genial-featured sergeant came up and saluted as Lane dismounted.

"Well, Blifflins!" exclaimed the lieutenant, pleasantly. "Has the enemy showed up since I have been gone?"

"We haven't seen an Injun squaw," replied Sergeant Blifflins, readily. "Indeed, all of my boys are chafing for a scrimmage."

Lieut. Lane laughed.

"You'll have a chance some time," he cried. "Maybe you won't like it so well then."

Sergeant Blifflins glanced at Madge and lifted his hat. Lieut. Lane assisted Madge to dismount and then said:

"Miss Weston, this is Sergeant Blifflins. I shall leave you in his charge while I go to hunt up the Cyclone. He is a gallant soldier and you may feel safe with him as a defender."

"I have no fears," replied Madge, with a bright smile which won the sergeant's heart. "We shall get on famously, Lieut. Lane. I shall pray for your success."

"Have no doubt on that score," returned the lieutenant, springing again to saddle. "Come men, to saddle once more."

The cavalymen responded, and very soon Lieut. Lane and his hundred brave men were riding away across the prairie. Madge was left in charge of Sergeant Blifflins and twelve privates at the encampment.

It did not occur to Lieut. Lane that this guard was by any means too small. The cavalymen with their Winchesters could hold a large force of Indians at bay for several days, and certainly until their comrades should return.

This was Lieut. Lane's reasoning. How he was deceived we shall see.

Madge was made at home at the post. Sergeant Blifflins gallantly placed all the comforts of the place at her disposal. She sat upon the piazza of the ranch and watched the horizon for some sign of the return of those who were searching for her friends.

Thus the afternoon passed, and the sun was just sinking below the horizon, when Madge called to Sergeant Blifflins, who was passing. In a moment the officer was upon the piazza by her side.

"It may be nothing but my fancy," she said, apologetically, "but is not that a body of horsemen out there on the prairie?"

Sergeant Blifflins gazed long and earnestly at the moving object. Then he went into the ranch and came out with a glass.

"Yes," he declared, positively, "it is a body of horsemen, and if I am not wrong, they are white men, too."

"White men!" exclaimed Madge, half in joy. "Then perhaps it is Lieut. Lane returning?"

"No," replied the sergeant, positively. "I think they are cowboys."

Then he hastened away to give orders to his men. The little camp was at once made ready for defense in case the visitors should prove to be foes.

Nearer and nearer came the party of horse-

men. They could be seen to be half a hundred strong.

"They are cowboys," finally Blifflins declared, "they will do us no harm."

The post was almost daily visited by roving parties of cowboys.

Blifflins had never seen them in so large a party before, but the fact that they were not savages seemed to settle any question of their being enemies in his mind.

But Madge experienced a strange feeling of uneasiness. She remained upon the piazza scrutinizing the party as they rode up.

On they came at a swinging gallop, their broad sombreros flapping in the wind. They were rough, desperate looking men, and as their features became plainer, Madge sank back on her seat half fainting with horror and recognition.

In advance of the cavalcade rode a man whose evil eyes seemed suddenly to become fixed upon Madge.

It was Carlos Coleman.

The supposed cowboys were really the outlaw gang.

Leaving the hills, they had followed the trail all the way to the military encampment.

Coleman had not dreamed of finding Madge here. But now, as he saw her sitting on the piazza of the ranch, he involuntarily drew rein.

He swept the encampment with a quick, critical glance. Had the whole command been present he would have been placed in a serious if not fatal predicament.

But it required only a glance for him to perceive that the post was in the charge of a small guard. At once a devilish and daring resolve entered his mind.

He started forward again and rode right in to the encampment. Sergeant Blifflins saluted him in a hospitable way, believing the gang to be friendly cowboys. Madge, however, in terror retreated into the ranch.

Coleman bent a scowling gaze upon Blifflins, and cried:

"You have a gal here named Madge Weston. I want her."

The sergeant was astounded.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed, realizing that he had been deceived, and seizing his sword hilt.

"I am Carlos Coleman, if you want to know!" cried the outlaw chief, savagely. "Give that gal up or I'll burn your ranch down!"

"Easy, there, stranger," retorted Blifflins, coolly. "Remember you're fighting Uncle Sam when you talk that way."

"I don't care a hoorah for Uncle Sam, nor you, either!" roared the villain. "Are you going to bring out that gal?"

"No!" Sergeant Blifflins thundered back. "I will give you one minute to get out of this camp. Rally, boys! Fall back into the ranch. Wait till I give the order to fire."

The little squad of soldiers rushed forward and sprang upon the piazza of the ranch. Coleman saw that quick action was his game now. With cowardly instinct he pulled his revolver and fired at the brave sergeant.

Blifflins fell down the piazza steps. Coleman and his gang opened fire upon the little squad. Three of them fell. Only nine left against half a hundred human wolves.

"Down with the soldier dogs!" yelled the outlaw chief, leaping from his horse. "Kill every man of them, but don't hurt the gal! Burn the ranch! Forward all!"

The outlaws rushed to the attack. The soldiers made a brave fight, but they were outnumbered. In a twinkling they were shot

down in cold blood. Strong men seized Madge and bound her. She was once more in the power of her dread foe, and carried away on horseback across the plain. She looked back in the dim light of evening to see the outpost in flames. The villain had again the ascendancy.

CHAPTER LX.

AN APPALLING DISASTER.

FRANK READE, JR., carefully examined the two trails and the ground about. It was easy to see that there had been a conflict here between the troops and the Indians.

That the former had triumphed was a foregone conclusion. It was then more than likely that Madge had been rescued.

"I will wager this was Lane's command," declared Frank, positively. "If so Madge then, let us hope, is safe in his hands."

A wild cry of joy escaped Enid, who had left the Cyclone and joined the searching party.

"Oh, do tell me that my dear sister has been rescued," she cried, exuberantly. "Oh, that will make me so happy."

"I feel almost warranted in telling you that," declared Frank Reade, Jr. "But we shall soon ascertain."

"The Indians have gone to the east here," declared Dr. Vaneyke. "As near as I can make out this trail to the southward is that of the soldiers."

"Exactly," replied Frank. "Which is only another proof that Madge has been rescued, else the soldiers would have pursued the Indians."

The spirits of all arose. It seemed as if the Cyclone's mission was near its end. With Madge safely on board they could at once start on the homeward way.

All were getting a trifle homesick. The rough experiences and dangers to which they had been subjected in this uninviting country, led all to hope for a speedy leave-taking. Even Barney and Pomp had begun to think of dear old Readestown and its comforts.

Evening was rapidly coming on. All returned on board the Cyclone, and preparations were being made for following Lieut. Lane's trail.

In truth, if Lane had remained at the post that night the Cyclone would have put in an appearance the next morning and a great calamity been averted.

But this was not to be. Barney, forward of the pilot-house, suddenly shouted:

"Begorra, I believe I kin see the sogers comin' this way. Av it ain't thim, it's their ghosts, be me sowl!"

Great excitement was at once created. Everybody rushed to the Irishman's side. Sure enough, a body of horsemen were approaching across the plain.

Nearer they drew, until all doubt ceased that they were the cavalymen, with Lieut. Lane riding in advance.

But Madge could not be seen. Frank Reade, Jr., solved this question.

"That is easy!" he cried. "They have taken Madge to the outpost and have come out to look for us."

A few moments later Lieut. Lane galloped up to the spot. He swung his cap, and a cheer went up from the soldiers, which was answered by those on board the Cyclone.

The lieutenant dismounted, and Frank Reade, Jr., alighted from the Cyclone. They met on the prairie and gripped hands.

"Madge is safe!" Lieut. Lane cried, for he could read the question in the faces of all. "I rescued her from the Apaches upon this very spot. She is at the outpost."

"Heaven be praised!" cried Frank Reade, Jr. "Then our chase is ended."

This was echoed by the others on board the Cyclone. Enid was dancing with joy.

"Of course you will go along with us to the camp?" asked Lane.

"Of course," replied Frank. "Did you repulse the savages badly?"

"Well, we scattered them with some loss," replied the lieutenant. "The next party we tackle must be Carlos Coleman. But you will not remain in this region to hunt him down, Mr. Reade?"

"No, I think not," replied Frank. "My mission here was simply to rescue Enid Weston. I shall start for home at once."

"I wish we could depend upon the co-operation of the Cyclone."

"I would like to see Coleman brought to justice," said Frank. "But I feel sure that you are quite able to do it without my assistance, Lieut. Lane."

"Well," said Snyder, who had been waiting in some impatience. "Shall we go on to the post to-night?"

The lieutenant exchanged glances with Frank Reade, Jr.

"I am ready," declared the young inventor. "With the search-light we can go anywhere in the darkness, you know."

"Certainly," replied the lieutenant, but with a dubious expression. "I fear, however, that my horses are worn out. I would rather camp until morning. We can then go on together."

"How far is it from here to the post?" asked Frank.

"It is a matter of twenty-five miles."

"Ah, then you are warranted in going into camp. So be it. We will wait for daylight and go ahead together."

"Very good," replied Lane. "Of course Madge is all safe. We shall reach the post before noon to-morrow."

This matter settled, preparations were at once made for spending the night upon the spot. Duncan Snyder was anxious to go on that night, but a little argument settled his mind.

The soldiers made camp, and corraled their horses. In the timber water was found, so that it proved a very good place to camp after all.

The Cyclone's search-light threw a radiance over the camp which was like daylight. A short while later the camp was in deep slumber.

The night hours passed, and with the first gray light of dawn in the east everybody was astir.

The horses were grazed and cared for, then saddled, and the order to advance was given.

The cavalry rode ahead and the Cyclone followed. Everybody was upon the *qui vive* and greatly excited.

Had the Cyclone gone ahead, it could easily have covered the twenty-five miles in an hour. But the cavalry horses were nearly three hours in doing it.

Lieut. Lane had fallen alongside of the Cyclone with his horse and was talking with Frank Reade, Jr., through the netting when a sharp cry came from the advance guard.

One of the officers waved his hand to Lane. The lieutenant and Frank Reade, Jr., as well as the cause of it.

Far away on the horizon was a black pall of smoke. The lieutenant scrutinized it intently and his face paled.

"That is queer," he muttered. "It comes from the direction of the ranch. Can anything have happened?"

A chill, horrible fear swept over him. For a moment he clutched at his breast with his

gauntleted hand. Then giving his horse spurs he rode forward.

"Forward all!" he shouted. "Something is wrong at the post. Do not spare your horses. Double-quick!"

With a cheer, the soldiers swept on faster, and the Cyclone thundered on behind. Nearer every moment they drew to the outpost.

"Queer!" muttered Lane, as he rode on with blanched face. "Blifflins was a brave fellow and no ordinary force of Apaches could capture the ranch. My God! I fear the worst."

Nearer the smoke pall drew. But long before they came to the river Lane knew that the worst had happened.

He groaned and seated himself deeper in his saddle.

"Poor Blifflins," he muttered. "I will wager that he died game."

Now they rode down upon the scene. It was a pitiable one. The ranch was a smoldering heap of ashes, the white tents were all down and the charred bodies of many of the soldiers were protruding from the ashes.

Those on board the Cyclone were not less horrified than the soldiers who had lost their brave comrades.

"My soul!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr., casting a pitying glance at Enid's pale face. "I fear that Madge Weston has met her doom."

"Now, I would give my commission," cried Lane, in bitter anguish, "if I could but know who has done this thing."

A groan was heard and from beneath a heap of debris a man, bloodstained, crawled painfully out. It was Sergeant Blifflins.

CHAPTER LXI.

IN THE LOON MOUNTAINS.

SERGEANT BLIFFLINS, white and haggard, and bloodstained, but yet alive, crept out from beneath the debris.

He had been shot down, as we have seen in a previous chapter, by Coleman, and tumbled unconscious down the ranch steps.

But fortunately the wound had not proved a fatal one. It had merely glanced along the skull, producing a concussion and consequent insensibility.

He had come to after the outlaws had gone, and just in time to escape falling a victim to the flames. He crawled beyond their reach and under some debris.

Here he again relapsed into unconsciousness. When he came to it was to hear his lieutenant's voice, and looking up, he saw his comrades and the Cyclone.

Summoning all his strength, he crawled out from beneath the rubbish.

In an instant Lane was at his side.

"Blifflins!" he cried. "Thank God, you are alive!"

"Y-yes," weakly exclaimed the wounded man, "but the others—are they all dead?"

"They must be," declared Lane, "for there are many bodies strewn about. But tell me, Blifflins, in the name of God, who has done this?"

"That murderous outlaw, Carlos Coleman," replied the sergeant.

"Coleman!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., exchanging glances with Lane. "My mission is not ended, Lieut. Lane, for I shall stay and hunt that monster down."

"But the girl?" asked Lane.

"I—I do not know," replied the wounded sergeant. "They must have taken her away with them."

Some brandy was forced between the lips of the brave sergeant, and then by Frank Reade,

Jr.'s request, he was taken aboard the Cyclone.

A quick consultation was held.

"Mr. Frank Reade, Jr.," exclaimed Lane.

"Will you join me in an attempt to hunt down this monster?"

"I certainly will," replied Frank, firmly. "I only hope that Madge is alive. If so, we will rescue her yet."

Enid was in a paroxysm of grief and terror. It took the combined efforts of Frank and Lane to quiet her.

A deadly resolve for vengeance was the sentiment of all in the troop. They would avenge their slaughtered comrades at any cost.

Carlos Coleman should be hunted to death. With this decision a plan of procedure was at once discussed.

It was decided that the Cyclone and the cavalry should separate. It was believed that Coleman would now strike for the Loon Mountains, a range one hundred and fifty miles due west.

"If you will strike into the range to the northward, Mr. Reade," said Lane, "you will find good safe passes for the Cyclone. We will invade the hills from the south and thus pen the villain in. Once we get him cornered in the hills, we can besiege him if nothing else, until he is forced to give up."

"Very well," agreed Frank. "I will pursue the course you suggest. I propose that we start at once."

"I agree with you," said Lane. "My command shall go forward this moment. I shall hope to see you in the near future."

Lane leaped down from the Cyclone's deck and mounted his horse. He waved an adieu to Frank Reade, Jr., and the detachment rode away at full gallop.

Frank at once gave orders to Barney to start the dynamos. The Cyclone was soon bowling on her way.

Sergeant Blifflins began to recuperate rapidly. He took an active interest in all that was going on about him, and was lionized for his bravery by all on board the Cyclone.

"I wish I was able to be with the troop," he exclaimed, longingly. "I'd just like to be with Lane when he comes down on Coleman."

"Carlos Coleman is near the end of his rope," declared Frank Reade, Jr., positively. "You shall very soon see that I am speaking the truth."

"I hope so!" cried the brave sergeant.

On bowled the Cyclone until after a time a range of hills began to rise to view on the horizon.

"There are the Loon Mountains if I am not mistaken," declared Dr. Vaneyke, examining them through his glass. "As near as I can make out from the chart I am right."

"No doubt of it," agreed Frank; "but we shall soon reach them and then we shall know for certain."

The Cyclone was put to the highest speed for the prairie was smooth. Like a meteor the electric wonder fled across the plain and mile after mile was left behind, until finally the mighty range of hills loomed up near at hand.

Soon what seemed like a good means of entrance to the hills presented itself in the shape of a deep canyon or pass. Into this the Cyclone made its way.

For a mile or more no difficulty was encountered. The floor of the canyon was as smooth and hard as could well be. But after a time obstacles were encountered.

Huge bowlders blocked the pass, and the Cyclone came to a halt. It was quite impossible to go further. What was to be done?

At first the idea suggested itself to Frank Reade, Jr., of going back to the prairie and looking for another pass.

But a peculiar incident changed his plans.

A startled cry came from Barney, who was forward of the pilot-house.

"Be jabbers, wud yez luk at that, Misther Frank! Phwativer wud yez call it, anyway?"

Frank looked in the direction indicated, as did everybody else upon the Cyclone's deck, and saw, far up on a peak in the hills, a flag of blood-red hue.

There it was fluttering in the breeze from a

"No," replied Frank, shaking his head. "It is more likely to mark the way into the outlaws' camp."

"Yet, you cannot fancy that they would mark the way so plainly for us?"

"Ah, but they probably do not know that we are here. If they did they would not leave that flag in its present position."

"I agree with you on that score," declared the doctor. "Under these circumstances what is best to be done?"

"I already have a plan," replied Frank. "Do you see that path up the cliff?"

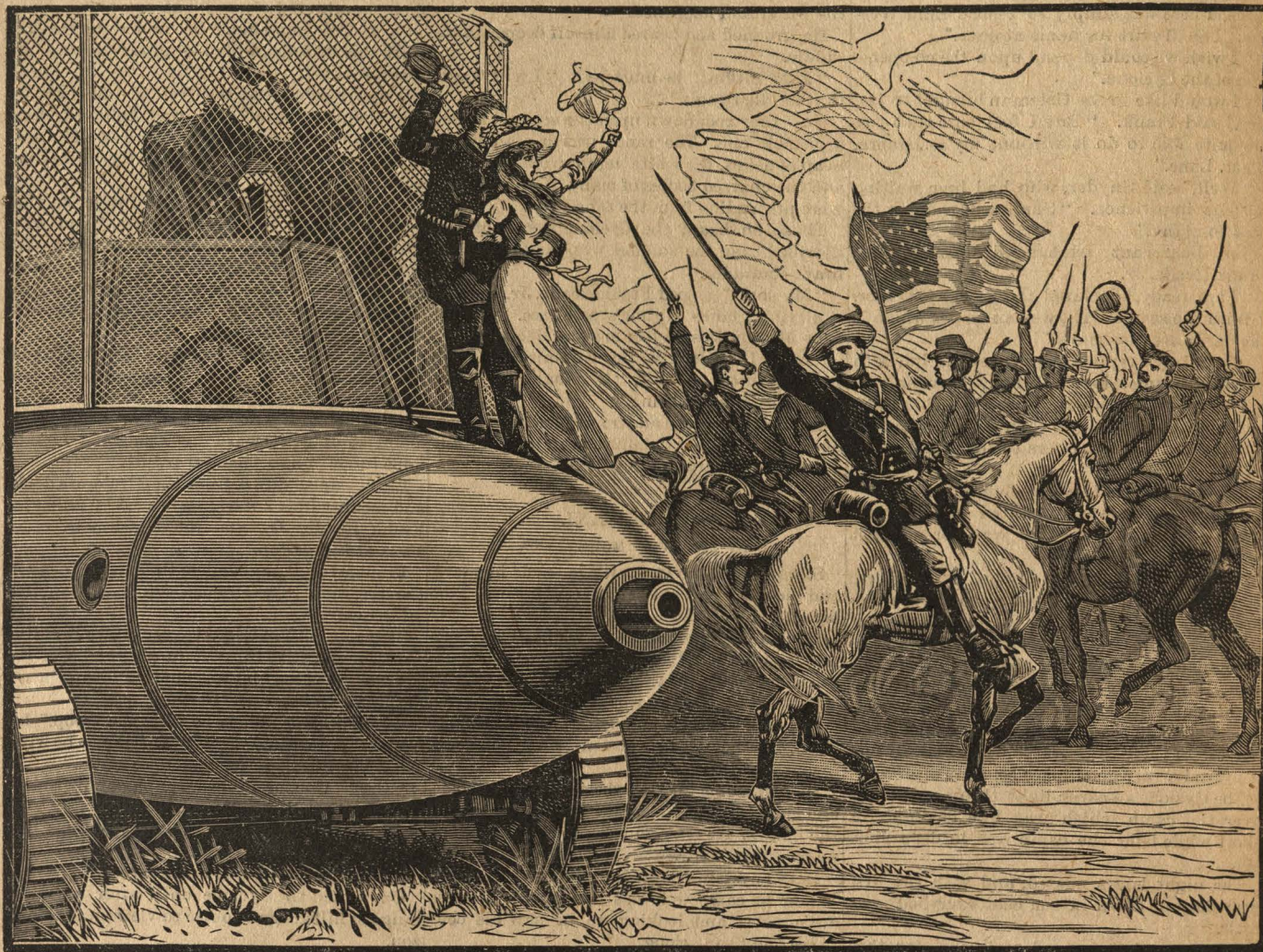
Pomp and of Dr. Vaneyke as well. In a few moments he returned properly armed and equipped. Frank Reade, Jr., was awaiting him, and leaving the Cyclone they began to climb up the cliff path.

Those left on board the Cyclone watched them until they were out of sight.

CHAPTER LXII.

A DEATH TRAP.

ARRIVED at the top of the cliff, Frank Reade, Jr., was enabled to look down upon the Electric Cyclone, which looked very small indeed at



Now that the plan was decided upon, no time was lost in making the start. Those on board the Cyclone waved a farewell to Lieut. Lane and his men, who galloped away to the southward.

tall staff. Frank looked at it with wonderment.

What did it mean? Was it a signal or did it mark the outlaws' camp? There was a possibility that some government surveying party had placed it there. But Frank Reade, Jr., did not believe this.

Various theories were discussed by all on board the Cyclone. But Frank had already decided upon what he believed would be the proper plan.

"That is a queer thing, is it not, Frank?" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke, as he joined the young inventor.

"I agree with you," replied Frank. "What do you think of it?"

"I hardly know. At first I thought it a signal from Lane. But that hardly seems likely."

"Yes."

"That was no doubt made by some wild animals who were in the habit of creeping down into the canyon for water. Follow that path to some height above and it looks to me as if one should be able to see into the outlaws' camp, which is doubtless around that peak."

"You are right," cried the doctor, with alacrity. "Allow me to go up there, Frank—"

"No," replied the young inventor, decidedly. "Only Barney shall accompany me."

"Whurrool that's for me ivery toime," cried the delighted Hibernian. "I'm wid yez, Misther Frank, an' bad luck to the omadhauns if we—"

"That is enough, Barney," interrupted Frank. "Go and get ready at once. Report on deck in three minutes."

Barney scurried away, enjoying the envy of

that distance. But he was disappointed with regard to the view of the outlaw's camp.

The base of the peak was concealed by a high ridge. A large body of water—a sort of elevated lake, as it were—lay above the canyon, and seemed only prevented from emptying itself into the canyon by a dam of stone and logs, which to Frank, at that distance, looked as if it had been constructed by the hands of man.

Frank was much disappointed at his inability to see into the outlaw's camp.

That it existed beyond the ridge he had little doubt. What would seem to confirm his belief was the fact that a thin blue column of smoke arose in the air from behind it.

"Bejabbers, the spalpeen must be hiding ferriest that big rise of rock, Misther Frank!" declared Barney, positively. "Wudn't yez say

of that same?"

"It looks plausible, Barney," replied Frank Reade, Jr., thoughtfully, as he studied the face of the country about. "I think we can get a better point of view just above here."

"All roight, sorr. Jist lead on."

Frank had turned to lead the way around the base of a high peak when Barney stopped short with a sharp cry.

"Be me sowl!" he gasped, "wud yez luk at the loikes av that!"

"What?"

Frank Reade, Jr., turned and saw his faithful servant standing with chattering teeth and

"Nonsense, Barney!" exclaimed Frank, sharply. "None of your superstition now. This is no time for nonsense."

"Shure yez are the boss, Misther Frank," rejoined Barney, plucking up courage. "I needn't fear the devil wid yez on me side."

"Come along then without further nonsense."

Barney was silent and followed Frank on up the height. They had soon skirted its base and saw the whole upper length of the canyon.

In a moment more they would have reached a point from whence a view of the territory be-

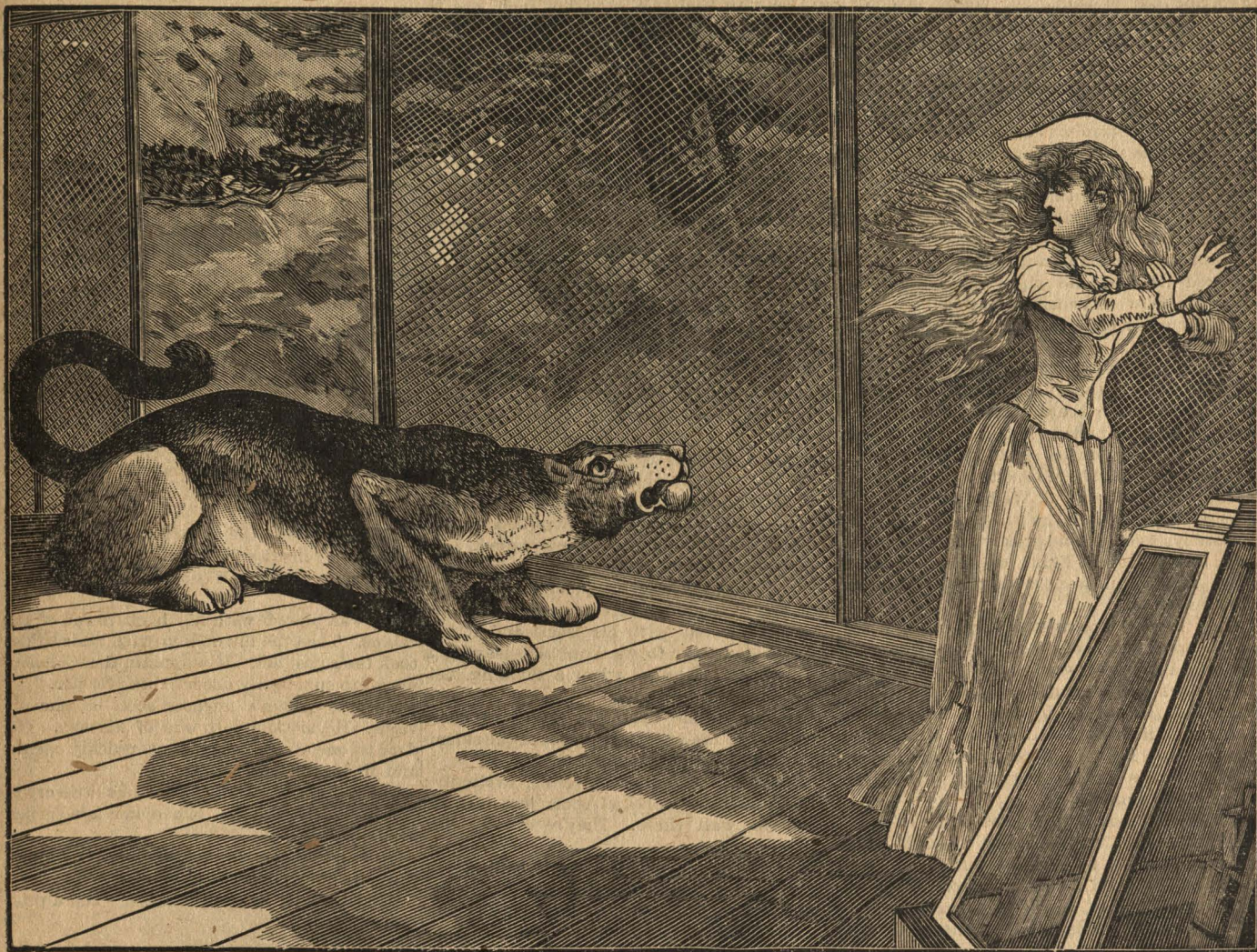
understand the peril and grasp the situation, cried:

"Don't cry out or move, Barney. Feign death. I will save you."

The brave Irishman was suffering from several painful wounds inflicted by the bear's claws and the shock of his fall, but he nobly restrained even a groan, and lay still and inanimate under the big brute's weight.

Frank Reade, Jr., fully comprehended the peril of the moment.

He knew the deadly and dangerous character of the grizzly bear full well. He realized that



The panther alighted upon the Cyclone's deck and fixed its glaring orbs upon her. The savage beast, lashing its tail furiously, was not ten feet from her. Enid, overcome with horror and the awful fascination of terror, could not move.

distended eyeballs gazing in the direction of the peak.

The young inventor turned his own gaze in that direction and gave a mighty start. What did it mean? What strange thing was this? The red flag, staff and all, had disappeared like a flash.

There was nothing left to indicate that it had ever been there.

"That is queer!" ejaculated the young inventor. "I'd like to know what sort of hocus-pocus that is, anyway."

"Be me sowl, I belave it's the devil's own worruk!" chattered Barney. "Shure no man could iver have cloimbed to the top av that slippery place to put that flag up, anyway! Whurroo! had cess to the whole thing is phwhat I say."

yond the ridge could be had. But a startling thing happened.

Frank had passed almost without noticing it a deep aperture in the rocks. Unnoticed by him a deadly peril lay concealed in that aperture.

Barney came along just in time to catch it. A huge black shaggy form sprang out of the little cavern with a savage growl.

The bear, for such it was, a monster of the grizzly species, was upon Barney in an instant. The Hibernian was attacked so suddenly that he had no chance to defend himself and was crushed to the ground.

The grizzly pinned Barney to the ground with its huge paws and turned a savage glance toward Frank Reade, Jr. A sharp, quick cry had escaped Barney's lips, but Frank, quick to

it was a foe of no mean sort, and that there was very little chance of saving Barney's life.

But he never once lost his nerve or forgot himself. He proceeded with the utmost discretion and yet celerity.

With fearlessness Frank took a step nearer the grizzly, making menacing gestures. His plan was to entice the bear from his helpless victim and it was a success.

The grizzly growled savagely and shook his shaggy mane as Frank tantalized it. Then the brute thrust his nose into Barney's face, and seemingly satisfied that his victim was dead, took a step toward Frank.

This was what the famous inventor wanted. He withdrew a step or two as the bear made a slow, cautious move toward him.

Not until the grizzly was well clear of Bar-

ney's prostrate form did Frank act. Then he said, sharply:

"Now, Barney, I am going to give him a shot. If you are able to, after I fire, jump up and give him another in the back."

"All right, sorr!" cried Barney, forgetting his risk in making speech. But the grizzly had made ready for his spring at Frank.

Just as he made it, Frank's rifle rang out. The bullet was aimed for bruin's heart, but tore a great hole in his side. It did not prove fatal or stay the bear in his onslaught.

Straight for Frank Reade, Jr., he made with a terrific roar of pain. The young inventor's rifle was dashed from his grasp and a blow of the bear's tremendous paw sent him tumbling several yards away.

The bear was right after him. That moment would have been Frank Reade, Jr.'s last but the brave Irishman was upon his feet now.

Barney was a splendid marksman, and quick as a flash had drawn a bead upon bruin. His rifle cracked and this time his shot told. Straight to the grizzly's heart it went, and the monster fell in the throes of death.

Frank was instantly upon his feet and recovered his rifle. He wiped the perspiration from his brow and coolly remarked:

"That was a close call for both of us, Barney."

"Shure, an' it was," cried the excited Irishman, kicking the bear's inanimate form. "It's a foine skin the brute has, Mr. Frank. If I had the toime I'd relave him av it, bein' as it won't be av any further use to his highness."

"Perhaps you'll have time to do it on our return," replied Frank. "We have no time to lose just now. Let us go on."

Barney gave the dead grizzly a farewell kick, and then followed Frank up the mountain side. The next moment a startling sight was awarded them.

They were at a point now from whence the entire upper course of the canyon could be seen. It seemed to be the overflow outlet of a large lake which also seemed held from precipitating itself into the canyon by a dam. It was now seen that this dam was artificial. Indeed, to Frank's and Barney's amazement and horror, a score of men were seen working with picks and axes to demolish it.

"Wud yuz look at the loikes av that?" cried Barney, wildly. "Shure, they mane to turn the wather down upon the Cyclone."

"My God!" cried Frank, in horror. "Those are Coleman's men, and it is a horrible trap. If that flood descends into the canyon, the Cyclone is lost."

"It's back I'll go an' warn them," cried Barney. But before he could make a move, the outlaws retreated from the dam, there was a mighty explosion and then the whole vast flood surged down into the canyon, to sweep the Cyclone out of existence.

A wild yell from the outlaws arose above the thunder of the water. But Frank and Barney were speeding back to the point from whence they could look down upon the Cyclone.

They arrived there a moment later, but sick with horror, beheld the gorge filled with the thundering flood. Not a sign of the Cyclone could be seen.

It seemed a certainty that the Cyclone and all on board had been overtaken by the flood and carried on to destruction and death.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A FEARFUL SACRIFICE.

LIEUT. LANE was possessed of a strong determination to rescue Madge or die in the attempt—when he galloped away with his com-

mand after the destruction of the military camp.

He firmly believed that Coleman had sought shelter in the Loon Mountains. If so, no stone should be unturned until he had run the villain down.

Moreover, the brave lieutenant was thrilled with the thought that beautiful Madge Weston was in the power of the unscrupulous brute.

Down deep in the lieutenant's heart there was a smoldering spark all ready to be kindled into flame.

He could admit only to himself that he was in love with Madge Weston, but such was the case. He would give his life to effect her rescue.

This passion, of which none but himself dreamed, spurred him on to desperation. He was confident that his liking for Madge was reciprocated. Madge had betrayed by both word and look that she returned his regard.

Lane was a brilliant young West Point graduate.

He came of a fine family and had spent much of his life in gay society among beautiful women. But he escaped the fire, passed through all with immunity, only to lose his heart to demure little Madge Weston.

She was just his type of a girl, he told himself. He could not exactly define why, but he loved her. That was enough. If possible, he would win her for his wife.

The little troop of cavalymen rode onward. In due course of time the Loon Mountains were reached. Unhesitatingly Lane entered them.

But of course he did not do this without first throwing out a skirmish line or advance scout guard. After a time, the country became impassable for horses and a halt was called.

Thus far no sign of the outlaws had been seen. The region was rocky, and high precipices and deep defiles were upon every side.

Lane conferred with his scouts and it had been decided to go forward on foot, leaving a guard with the horses, when a thrilling incident happened.

From far up the mountain side there came the sound of fire-arms. Then one of the skirmish guards came rushing into camp.

"We've hit the foe!" he cried, excitedly; "there's half a hundred of them just over the mountain wall there. They're coming this way."

Lane hastily formed his men behind the cover of some bowlders. But the enemy did not show up. The skirmish line came in, but the foe did not pursue. After a period of waiting the brave young lieutenant decided to go forward on a reconnoitering tour.

"You are sure they were Coleman's men, Brown?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the sharpshooter, who had brought in the news.

This settled the matter. Lane at once selected four brave fellows, and leaving the squad in charge of a competent officer, he started over the mountain wall. It proved a fatal move.

They had not gone far when they were met by a volley of rifle balls. Two of Lane's companions fell.

The bullets came from a covert above, and the young lieutenant found to his dismay that they had unwittingly stumbled into an ambush! He essayed a retreat, but this was cut off by half a score of armed men. These closed in upon him.

Carlos Coleman's voice was heard:

"Surrender or ye'll die!"

"Better death!" cried Lane, bravely, as he discharged his revolvers at his foe. But they closed in upon him and in a twinkling he was

disarmed, while his two remaining companions were shot down in cold blood.

It was Coleman's orders that he should not be killed, and the cunning villain had an adroit purpose in this.

The remainder of the troop, upon hearing the shots, had at once started to Lane's relief. But they encountered a determined resistance from a concealed band of the outlaws and were driven back.

"Ah, my fine soldier!" cried Coleman, in a leering way, as he confronted Lane, "ye've run your head into a fine trap, haven't ye? I haven't done with ye yet. I've an end to serve with you."

Lane vouchsafed no reply. By Coleman's orders a couple of the outlaws advanced and seized Lane by the arms. In passing one of the outlaws, Coleman said:

"I'm going inter camp with this chap, Smythe. See to it that you keep those soldiers back."

"I will that," was the surly reply.

Coleman led the way through a rocky passage, and soon they were over the ridge. A strange scene was here revealed.

Upon a sort of rocky plateau there was a collection of log huts. These were occupied by the outlaws and this was the Loon Mountain retreat of Coleman. As they crossed the plateau, a number of the gang lounging about rushed forward.

"Attention, men!" cried Coleman, commandingly; "I want six of ye to form a line fifty paces from the rear of that cabin. Put this man with his back to the cabin and get ready to blaze at him."

This then was to be Lane's fate. The young lieutenant's heart sank, but he did not betray any fear. Coleman's orders were quickly obeyed.

He was placed with his back to one of the cabins. Then the file of men with loaded rifles took their position. It was plain that Coleman meant to summarily execute his prisoner.

But the villain's purpose soon became obvious. He motioned to one of his men. The door to one of the cabins was quickly opened and Madge Weston was led out.

The young girl gave a start and a little cry of terror as she saw Lane. Then her face turned deadly pale.

There was a mocking smile upon Coleman's lips, a triumphant light in his eyes.

"Lieut. Lane!" gasped Madge, "and a prisoner."

"Just so!" exclaimed Coleman, with a mocking laugh. "And his life is in your hands."

"In my hands!" exclaimed Madge.

The young lieutenant's ardent gaze was bent upon her, and it seemed to confuse her. Coleman saw this, and closed his jaws with a vicious snap.

"I have said so," he declared. "Let us have plain talk. I know that you and this officer are in love. Now he is my prisoner. You would sacrifice much to save his life. I feel sure of that. At my word he will die. It remains with you whether I say that word or not."

"Hold!" cried Lane. "I will not consent to that. Miss Weston shall make no sacrifice for me. I am not afraid to die."

Madge felt giddy and faint, but she managed to say:

"To save your life I will sacrifice mine!" then to Coleman, "what can I do to save the prisoner from your sentence of death?"

The outlaw smiled in an evil, triumphant way.

"You can guess," he replied. "It is your sacred promise that you will marry me."

"Never!" she cried, with flashing eyes.

"Then the man dies!"

Coleman spoke savagely.

The file of armed men raised their rifles.

"I will give you but one minute to decide!" he cried, harshly. "Say yes or no—quick!"

"Miss Weston!" cried Lane, writhing with his bonds, "do not sacrifice your happiness for my wretched life. Let me die, and remain free from the foul disgrace of becoming the wife of that monster!"

"Ready—aim!" cried Coleman, who saw that the nail should be clinched at once.

A fearful wave of emotion seemed to overwhelm Madge. She raised her eyes Heavenward, and seemed to be praying. Then she seemed to be gathering strength, and turning to Coleman, in a constrained voice she said:

"If you will set him free, I will promise."

Every vestige of color was gone from her face. She was like a marble statue.

A hoarse cry of protest rang from Lane's lips, but by Coleman's sharp orders he was hurried out of the camp. Once beyond its lines, his bonds were cut, and one of the outlaws said:

"Now cut for tall timber. You're lucky to get off this time alive. Get—lively!"

CHAPTER LXIV.

OUT OF THE CANYON.

AFTER Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney left the Cyclone, Dr. Vaneyke experienced a strange presentiment. It seemed to him as if some evil event was impending.

He could not rid himself of this conviction, and so he kept constantly on the watch for danger.

It was fortunate that he did this. They were all unsuspecting the existence of the trap until a first inkling of the mighty peril manifested itself. This was in the shape of a small rivulet which came down the canyon and flooded it to the depth of an inch or more.

The doctor was startled at the sudden appearance of the water, and like a flash the possibility of a flood came over him.

He did not stop to investigate where the water came from. He was disposed to accept it as sufficient warning.

"Pomp!" he cried, rushing to the pilot-house.

"Do you know where the water comes from?"

"Fo' suah I does not," replied the dinky.

"Ah, what is that?"

A distant, booming noise up the canyon decided the doctor. There was no longer any doubt in his mind.

"Let the Cyclone fly, Pomp!" he cried, excitedly. "A flood is coming."

And before Pomp could fairly get a grasp on the wheel, the doctor had set the dynamos humming, and the Cyclone started down the canyon.

This proved to be none too soon, for swift upon their rear came a mighty mountain of water. Down through the canyon sped the Cyclone, with the flood after it.

It was a race for life. All on board the electric wonder were in a paroxysm of suspense and terror. If the water should overtake the Cyclone, it would be wrecked, and all would be lost.

Pomp hung to the wheel like grim death. Dr. Vaneyke charged the dynamos to their highest capacity. Snyder stood ready to assist. Enid, frightened nearly out of her wits, clung to a railing on the deck and watched the water with white face.

Fortunately, the course was a clear and smooth one. The Cyclone encountered no ob-

stacles, and kept on at a tremendous rate of speed.

With hungry rush and roar the mighty monster came on behind. Steadily, but slowly, the flood gained upon the Cyclone.

Eventually it must have been overtaken, but the course was not over a mile in length, and suddenly emerging from the canyon, the Cyclone went speeding up an incline opposite.

The waters were here diverted to the right by a deep channel, and went thundering away down to the plain below. The Cyclone was saved.

Not until the top of the incline was reached did any one venture to draw a breath of relief. Then Dr. Vaneyke shut off the dynamos, applied the electric brakes and the Cyclone came to a stop.

"Fo' de good Lor!" gasped Pomp, emerging from the pilot-house. "Dat am de wus' ride dis nigger eber had in his life. Shuah fo' goodness, I done finked dat we wus all goners dat time."

"I should say so, Pomp," exclaimed the scientist, breathlessly, as he flung himself into a seat. "I thought it was the end of the Cyclone, sure."

"I think we have reason to be very thankful," ventured Enid, the color coming back to her face.

"I would like to know where that flood came from," declared Snyder, strongly. "I believe that it was a trap. Human hands had something to do with it, be sure."

"Mr. Snyder, I believe you are right," cried Dr. Vaneyke, with inspiration. "I will wager that the upper end of the canyon had been dammed up for this very purpose. It is Carlos Coleman's work!"

"'Clar' to goodness, I jes' beliebe dat ar' t'ing m'self," cried Pomp, excitedly.

"Well," rejoined Snyder, with a laugh, "perhaps we are premature in charging all the deviltry in this country to Coleman. But I really believe that he is at the bottom of this."

"See!" cried the doctor, starting up, "the flood is nigh spent now. In half an hour the canyon floor will be as dry as before. If I was sure that there would not be another flood, I would go back there and make rigid investigation."

"We jes' orter go back there, anyway," cried Pomp, with dilated eyes. "Marse Frank an dat I'ishman am mos' suah to come back dar. Whatebber will they do, if we don' go back?"

"Pomp is right," agreed the doctor. "As soon as the flood is spent we will go back."

The Cyclone was turned about, and made ready for thereturn. A sharp watch was kept for some sign of Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney, and while thus engaged a sharp cry broke from Snyder.

"Look!" he cried, pointing to the plain below. "A horseman! Who is he?"

Every eye was bent upon the new-comer. He was riding furiously, and it was plain that the Cyclone was his objective point. As he drew nearer he made excited gesticulations.

"Who is he?" cried the doctor.

"Fo' goodness sake!" cried Pomp. "It am one ob dem soldier men."

This was a fact. The rider was dressed in the blue uniform of the cavalry. He drew his sabre and waved it.

"One of the lieutenant's men!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "Something has happened."

With suspense now those on board the Cyclone waited the arrival of the courier. Soon he topped the rise and dashed up to the Cyclone.

Then it could be seen that he was one of Lane's men, and that he was pallid and blood-stained. He sank half fainting over the pommel of his saddle as his horse stopped.

"Give him a stimulant," cried the doctor, as he leaped down from the Cyclone's deck.

Pomp brought a flask of brandy from the cabin. The doctor held it up to the exhausted man's lips. He thanked his benefactors huskily and drank of the stimulant.

It revived him and in a few moments he was able to talk. His first move was to excitedly wave his arm toward the hills.

"I have come for help!" he cried. "Lieut. Lane is dead and the troops are being cut to pieces by the outlaws. They are hemmed in and cannot get out."

The effect of this information was startling in the extreme. Dr. Vaneyke gave a cry of horror.

"Lane dead!" he gasped. "That is too dreadful. Where are your comrades?"

"They are hemmed in by the outlaws in a small pass in the hills."

"In what direction is this pass?"

The courier pointed directly to the west. It was in the same direction that the red flag had been seen some time previous. There was no doubt now but that that flag had marked Coleman's camp.

"All right!" cried the doctor, excitedly. "Of course we will go to your comrades' relief. But I wish Frank Reade, Jr., was here."

"Suppose we first run back to the canyon and see if we cannot find Frank and Barney," suggested Snyder.

"Oh, do not waste time!" cried the courier, with agitation. "I fear the brave boys have all laid down their lives before this."

The doctor hesitated.

The inclination was strong within him to send the Cyclone thundering to the relief of the troops. Yet he disliked to abandon the vicinity before the return of Frank Reade, Jr.

He had really no right to do this. Yet he felt sure Frank would sanction the move under the circumstances. But time was most precious and should not be wasted.

"Are you sure the Cyclone can reach the spot where your comrades are besieged?" he asked, sharply. "What is the nature of the ground?"

"I think it can," replied the courier. "It is a smooth pass. I will show you the way."

"All right!" cried the doctor, as he sprang aboard. "It is our duty to rescue those beleaguered men. We will then return for Frank and Barney. Take the wheel, Pomp."

But the dinky had been engaged in scrutinizing the canyon and its approaches, and now a sharp cry escaped his lips.

CHAPTER LXV.

A TIMELY WARNING.

FRANK and Barney were overcome with the fearful force of the reflection that the Cyclone had been overtaken by the flood. Sick and faint with horror the young inventor cried:

"My God! they are lost, Barney! The Cyclone is gone."

"Bad luck to the devils fer iver doing av sich a thing," cried Barney, with a wail. "May the fiends pursue thim. Whativer shall we do, Mистер Frank?"

Frank Reade, Jr., with an effort composed himself. His was one of those dauntless spirits which no reverse can ever break.

"There is only one thing to do, Barney," he declared more calmly. "The Cyclone was, in a measure, a water craft. Being buoyant and with a hollow shell, she might float safely out

of the canyon. It would be one chance in five hundred, but yet it is a chance. We will hope."

"Bejabers, there's too much force to thim waves, Misther Frank," groaned Barney. "Shure, wan av thim would break the Cyclone in two the first whack."

"It looks that way," agreed the young inventor. "But we won't give up hope yet."

"All roight, sor. It's down the canyon we'll be afther going?"

"Yes."

Barney strove to assume a cheerful expression, even venturing to whistle, and followed Frank closely.

Along the canyon wall they went.

The flood had reached its greatest height, and the waters were now beginning to subside. Gradually they sank lower and lower.

In vain Frank looked for some sign of the Cyclone. At every turn in the canyon wall he expected to come upon the wreck. But he did not.

Indeed, the waters went down so that only a rivulet was left. The canyon floor was bare, and he could see the whole length of it.

The Cyclone was not to be seen.

Frank's heart gave a leap.

"If it lived to get out of the gorge," he muttered, "I may feel sure that it is all safe."

Thrilled with this anticipation, he hastened along the verge of the canyon wall. In course of time he descended to the point where the gorge ceased.

Barney was close upon his heels. The torrent had spread itself into a lake upon the plain far below. But its surface was smooth and unbroken. There was no sign of the Cyclone.

Again Frank's heart sank. Probably the electric wonder had been carried down there only to be engulfed beneath that expanse of water.

"I fear our hopes are dashed," he said, with a deep groan. "All is up, Barney."

But the Celt had been gazing in an entirely different direction. His gaze had wandered to the summit of the incline just in front of the canyon.

He rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not mistaken, and then with a genuine Irish yell, cried:

"Whurroo! wud yez luk at the loikes av that, Misther Frank. There's the Cyclone al' roight an' tip-top, an' I kin see the naygur at this minnit a-standin' on the deck."

Frank saw the Cyclone on the eminence and a cheer burst from his lips. It was the most welcome sight he ever was accorded.

"You're right, Barney," he cried. "How did they get there?"

This was a puzzling question to Frank. He finally reasoned, however, that the doctor had in some way got warning of the flood, and escaped with the Cyclone just in time.

But Frank was puzzled to see a horseman by the Cyclone. Who was he, and what had happened? The only way to get an answer to this question was to go thither at once. This he proceeded to do, followed by Barney.

Pomp had been the first to see them approaching, as we have seen at the close of a preceding chapter. Dr. Vaneyke felt a great load lifted from his mind as he realized that Frank Reade, Jr., could now take the responsibility of action in the case of Lieut. Lane's command.

Of course, all were delighted that no harm had befallen Frank and Barney. In a few moments the young inventor was made acquainted with the state of affairs.

Then he recounted hastily his and Barney's adventures.

"You cannot know how overjoyed I was when I saw that the Cyclone was safe."

"Then it was all a trap after all?" cried the doctor.

"Of course. But for your prompt and sagacious action, the Cyclone would have been past all use now."

"But what shall we do in regard to Lane's men?"

"Go to their assistance," cried Frank, promptly. "Lead the way, courier, and we will follow. If we can once get the range of Coleman's camp with the electric gun, we will spoil his game forever."

The courier, with a glad cry at thus securing reinforcements, spurred forward. The Cyclone followed quickly.

It was quite a long run to the pass by which Lane had entered the hills. But it was reached and the sound of firearms was evidence that the battle was still on.

The Cyclone was allowed to run quickly through the pass, and, in a few moments, it was upon the scene. The soldiers were ensconced behind a pile of boulders. As long as they held their position they were safe.

But their ammunition must soon give out, and then it would be an easy matter for the outlaws to close in on them. Frank Reade, Jr., saw the situation at a glance.

The Cyclone was pushed forward and shots were exchanged. The outlaws' bullets rattled harmlessly against the Cyclone's steel sides.

Barney and Pomp were right in their element.

"Give it to the blasted omadhauns!" cried Barney, as he peppered the foe with his Winchester. "It's a good lesson we'll give 'em, bejabers."

"Hi, dar!" cried Pomp, excitedly. "Jes' yo' bet on dis nig. We kin jes' clar dem stuff out ob dar double quick time."

The outlaws seemed seized with consternation at the sudden appearance of the Cyclone. They kept well under cover of the rocks, and Frank saw no chance to use the electric gun.

But at this juncture a white flag was waved. "A flag of truce!" cried Dr. Vaneyke.

All ceased firing. Then a man appeared to view on the brow of the cliff with the flag of truce. It was Coleman.

The outlaw waved the flag, and shouted loudly:

"A truce! We want to talk with ye."

Frank went quickly forward of the pilot-house.

"Well, what do you want?" he shouted in reply.

"On what terms will ye quit our track?" cried the outlaw chief. "If I'll give up Madge Weston, will you, with the soldiers, withdraw and leave me?"

"Yes," replied Frank.

"I can't hear what ye say. Run yer machine up a little nearer."

"Jes' s'posin' yo' comes down," retorted Pomp with a grin.

"Hush, Pomp!" cried Frank, sternly. "I am doing the talking. Run the Cyclone up a little further, Barney."

Barney sprang to do Frank's bidding, but at that moment a loud voice of alarm came from the cliff above:

"For the love of God do not do it, Mr. Reade. If you go further up the pass, a dozen men are behind a big sock on the cliff which they will roll down upon you."

Frank and all on the Cyclone were petrified to see the speaker, no other than Lieut. Lane,

standing on the brow of the cliff and excitedly adjuring them. The young lieutenant had just come from the outlaws' camp and was just in time to warn the inmates of the Cyclone of the impending danger.

A yell of defeat came from the outlaws, followed by the crack of rifles. Brave Lieut. Lane threw up his arms and sank out of sight.

"My God!" gasped Frank, overcome with horror. "They have killed him."

CHAPTER LXVI.

COLEMAN'S DEFEAT—THE END.

For a moment Frank Reade, Jr., was quite overcome with the fate of Lieut. Lane. Then he aroused himself.

"Lane shall be avenged!" he cried, with flashing eyes.

Down into the cabin he sprang and went forward. He could see the huge boulder tottering on the brow of the cliff, though the men behind it were invisible.

"I'll soon settle their fate," he muttered, with set teeth; "they shall expiate their crimes in short order."

He drew a sight upon the boulder with the electric gun. There was a roar and lightning flashes. Then the huge boulder was reduced to powder, and the outlaws behind it were instantly killed.

It was a terrible act of retributive justice. Wild yells of terror were heard from the other outlaws, and they began to beat a retreat.

Frank again sprang on deck. Just as he did so a man rushed up the pass. All gave a wild cry. It was Lieut. Lane.

In another moment he was by the door in the netting. Frank sprang to the door to meet him.

"Lane!" he gasped. "I thought you dead!"

"Not much!" cried the plucky lieutenant; "that was only a ruse to deceive the outlaws. I am all right!"

"I am glad to hear it. Won't you come aboard?"

"No, I am going to join my men and lead them in a charge. I believe that victory is mine."

Away dashed the brave fellow. Frank Reade, Jr., sent another bolt from the electric gun up among the rocks. This effectually routed the outlaws.

With a cheer, now that their young leader was with them again, the troops rushed in pursuit. As he rushed on Lane thought only of Madge Weston.

Over the ridge the soldiers went. They were right in the outlaw camp now. Lane saw Coleman rush into the hut, and then saw Madge struggling in his arms.

Fired to desperation, Lane rushed toward the hut. He reached it, and burst in upon the would-be abductor. The outlaw saw him and turned upon him.

In doing this, he was obliged to release his hold upon Madge, who turned and fled from the hut. She saw the Cyclone at the summit of the ridge and rushed for it.

Coleman drew a brace of revolvers and retreated to the further end of the hut. The structure was surrounded by troops. Not one of his men was with him. At last he was cornered.

His eyes were bloodshot and his evil face contorted with hate and fury. Lane stood calmly in the center of the floor.

"Hands up, Carlos Coleman!" he cried, sternly. "You are cornered. At a word from me you are a dead man."

"Cornered!" gritted the villain, with a sardonic laugh. "Curse ye! the rope was never made which will stretch my neck. Ye'd hang me if ye could, but ye never will."

A sardonic laugh rang from his lips, and before an effort could be made to prevent, he raised one of the revolvers and deliberately fired a bullet through his brain.

He fell to the floor dead. Lane stood for an instant regarding the body, then left the hut. It was, after all, a fit ending of a crime-stained career.

The outlaw band, without its leader, was dispersed like chaff. Carlos Coleman's reign of ruffianism and terror was at an end. The great quest upon which Frank Reade, Jr., and his Electric Cyclone had been bent was at an end.

Madge Weston and Enid were united happily aboard the Cyclone.

The victorious troops returned, and drawn up about the Cyclone, gave ringing cheers.

Sergeant Blifflins was once more able to rejoin them, and they escorted the Cyclone out of the hills.

Once upon the open plain, Frank Reade, Jr., quickly set his course.

"Then we are really homeward bound, Frank?" asked Dr. Vaneyke.

"Certainly!" replied the young inventor.

"There is no call for our remaining in No Man's Land any longer. We have accomplished our mission. At the nearest point I shall wire the philanthropic Hon. Nelson Nevins of my success. The world will soon know of the rescue of little Enid Weston."

Pomp cut a pigeon wing, and Barney's broad mug expanded.

"Begorra, Misther Frank, I'd loike to see phwat yez couldn't do when yez starts out to do it."

"Spare your compliments, Barney," said Frank, with a laugh. "Perhaps we may not be so successful next time."

"Am we jes' goin' back to Readestown, Marse Frank?" asked Pomp.

"Just as straight as we can go," replied the young inventor.

"Ki-yi! I'se jes' glad ob dat!" cried the darky, delightedly.

Everybody shared this sentiment. Their hankering for wild adventure and thrilling scenes were for a time satiated. All longed for home and rest.

The Cyclone made quick time across the plain. The days passed and soon they were beyond the borders of No Man's Land.

Here Lieut. Lane and the troops took leave. But not until Lane had given Madge quiet assurance of a leave of absence before many months, which furlough he proposed to spend in Colville.

As they now reached the confines of civilization, great ovations awaited them. The news of the Cyclone's wonderful work was transmitted by wire all over the world.

Every newspaper took up the subject, and profuse encomiums of praise were showered upon Frank Reade, Jr.

A less sensible and resolute man would have had his head turned. But it did not affect Frank.

At Colville, Madge and Enid were left at their own door. Their parting from Frank Reade, Jr., was of the most affecting description.

"We shall never, never forget you, Mr. Reade," Madge protested, with tears in her eyes. "You have our undying gratitude."

Frank felt well repaid for his trouble. Hon. Nelson Nevins had come on from the East and here joined the Cyclone party. He was as good as his word, and insisted that Frank should take his check for the ten thousand dollars offered, but Frank would take nothing more

than the amount of his expenses, in the neighborhood of one thousand dollars.

The philanthropist rode the rest of the way to Readestown upon the Cyclone. At every city and town they might have been feted if they chose, but Frank was anxious to get home. The Hon. Nelson Nevins was bewitched, and offered Frank one hundred thousand dollars for the Cyclone.

This was promptly refused.

"I should have to give you the secret of its mechanism," declared the young inventor, "and that I could betray to no man for any price."

In due course the Cyclone reached home. Frank Reade, Jr., once more clasped his overjoyed wife and little son in his arms as well as embraced his father, who met him with great joy at his safe return.

The Cyclone needed many repairs and was at once put into the shop. Frank Reade, Jr., once more retired in the seclusion of his home to gain much needed rest. Before many months a pleasant surprise was accorded him.

This was in the shape of cards for the wedding of Lieut. Lane and Miss Madge Weston. The young inventor sent them a handsome present and his best wishes.

Barney and Pomp went back to their positions in the shop to work on a new invention. Frank Reade, Jr., was developing. Duncan Snyder realized the large reward offered to the detective who rescued Enid Weston, and returned to New York.

Dr. Vaneyke went back to his books and scientific work. He had gained many valuable specimens during this trip, being well repaid, and this announcement, dear reader, brings our story of the Electric Cyclone to

[THE END.]

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